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CHARITY

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CHARITY

BY

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JOHN LAVERY, A.R.A.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	ix
CHARITY	1
AUNT ELEANOR	12
LA ALCALDESA	25
AN HIDALGO	45
THE CRAW ROAD	65
SET FREE	73
CAISTEAL-NA-SITHAN	81
IMMORTALITY	94
A MEETING	104
SAN ANDRÉS	116
A BRAW DAY	133
AURORA LA CUJIÑI	146
UN AUTRE MONSIEUR	163
CHRISTIE CHRISTISON	177
A PRINCESS	196
EL JEHAD	208
LA PAMPA	227

PREFACE

Hope has been said to be the quality of youth, and faith of middle age.

Therefore, it ought to follow, that the old should cling to charity as the best antidote to avarice, their chief besetting sin. If, though, they have not in their youth been hopeful, and in their middle years imbued with faith, that is both in themselves, in others, and in the world in which they live, charity is not for them in age. Hope carries in itself something that impels our admiration; faith our respect; but charity is like a mountain seedling-pine, springing up oft in barren places, rooted amongst the rocks and flourishing in the chilliest blasts of life, and in despite of fate.

Honour and virtue do not of necessity take with them charity; neither can base estate nor any adverse circumstance of life stifle it in the hearts of those, to whom it comes, just as the fire shines out from a black opal, almost without their ken.

In a dark winding lane, just underneath the shadow of the rock on which Tarik first disem-

barked, lived Doña Ana Alvarez. Her enormous bulk had given her the nickname of Fat Anne, which she adopted cheerfully, bearing in mind the adage "Fatness comes far before mere beauty, any day." The flesh seemed to surge up, threatening to choke her, from her breast and neck. Jet would have looked a rusty brown beside her hair, which she wore always parted down the middle and trained into two curls, called whiskers by the women of her class in Spain. No one had ever seen her dressed but in a morning wrapper, either of piqué or of muslin, a habit which she alleged she had contracted in her youth, so as to be always ready for her work. Not that she said this in an indecent way, or with a wish to raise a smile at the application of the word, but because what she thus referred to was the only kind of work that she had ever done.

Quite simply she would explain, saying: "When I was young my mother sent me to a house in Seville, where I worked with the other girls, when I was just fourteen. In summer when I used to come back to Los Barrios, for in the heat of Seville there was no one left in town, my chief delight was to wake up and find myself alone."

Her father was a general, which in Spain corresponds to the familiar "daughter of a clergyman," and she herself kept an establishment in a winding lane, which ran off from the main street, just opposite the church. In it she sat in an armchair, flaccid, but business-like. Although she had retired from active intervention in the duties of her trade, she still darkened her eyelids and her eyebrows, powdered her face, and upon Saints' days and on Sunday wore a bright red carnation in her hair. Report averred that her heart still was tender, and that a general in La Linea occasionally visited her, but dressed in civil clothes, and that a famous bull-fighter, when he "killed" either in Algeciras or San Roque, usually had a glass or two of Manzanilla at her establishment. This naturally gave her a position of some consideration amongst her friends, and at the same time kept up her interest in life. Needless to say, her house was the resort of all the younger officers of the British fleet, when it came into what they all called "Gib." in their bluff Saxon way.

Kind and good-humoured, after their fashion, their intimate persuasion that they were all committing an offence, made them more brutal,

if more generous, towards the inmates of the house than were their fellow-sinners on board the other fleets that visited the port.

Nothing was commoner than to hear them say to one another, "What a beast one feels when one wakes up with a sore head, beside one of the girls, up at old Mother Anne's."

Most probably, no speculations of a moral kind had ever entered into the head of Ana Alvarez. She came, as she occasionally would say, in moments of expansion, when trade was bad, and when the Channel fleet delayed too long in coming, from a family who for three generations had always dealt in girls.

Her people all were old Christians, that is they had no stain either of Jewish or of Moorish blood, and in the annals of her family no thief was known, although, as she allowed, some few were smugglers, and her great-grandfather was the first man who ever trained a dog to carry on his back two little packs of fine tobacco and bring them through the lines.

Seated upon an Austrian cane chair, which she kept gently rocking with a foot, on which a satin slipper dangled from the toe, she used to pass away the time, between the siesta and the coming of the breeze, dozing, but vigilant,

ready to intervene in any quarrel that arose, or put a client at his ease, as he sat waiting, smoking cigarettes, whilst the girls dressed their hair. Fat Anne was in the main a kindly potentate, all her employees liked her, for, as they said, the "mistress knows the business, has worked at it herself, and does not ask impossibilities of any of the girls."

If they got into debt, she did not press them, and never charged them interest on the debt, saying, no doubt, that the Lord God would send some gentlemen along to pay it for them, when it seemed good to Him.

To this well-ordered house, in which, as all its inmates said, they all made money, and if a girl should chance to owe two or three ounces no interest was ever charged by Doña Ana, there came one day a man.

A guest on board the flagship, his name was Scudamore. The midshipman referred to him as "Ullage," though he was smart, good-looking and well dressed. At first he had some money and used to haunt Fat Anne's, taking up with a girl known as La Jerezána, tall, active and well-built. Not too fat, not too thin, the Arabs say, and she quite came up to their standard, and for the rest, no one could

better sing the Malagueña, or dance a Tango with the true movements of the hips.

At first a little flattered by the visits of the man, who she knew was on terms of intimacy with all the officers, little by little she began to love him, and at last doted upon him, with all the fierceness of affection of women of her class. Kind Doña Ana used to remonstrate, after the way a mother chides a wilful daughter, telling her that for a woman of her class nothing could be so fatal as to fall in love. "Daughter of my entrails," she would say, "love is not for us. All shall love us and waste their means to gratify our whims, but we, we shall take all, and go our way, rejoicing, till we have made enough to buy a husband, to soothe our older years."

La Jerezana owned the strength of the advice, but did not follow it, for, as she said, "Love is as obstinate as a male mule . . . and somehow . . . look, Doña Ana, you who have known the world, have you not sometimes, even with all your science, felt yourself bitten with a man?"

The matron smiled, and smoothing down her hair, said: "Yes, my daughter, for look you, the flesh is weak, and when a man talks

softly, speaking of love, to one of us, whose trade it is to simulate love's rapture for a dollar . . . you know, I never kept a house where less than that was charged . . . why, it seems sweet to us, and we forget, and become just as other women are . . . or worse, for we know better than they can, what love should be. I know, of course, I know, therefore I want you to escape. See, I will change you for a girl from a friend's house, in San Fernando. You shall not lose by it, and for the ounces that you owe—three is it?" Here she drew up her skirt, disclosing underneath a pocket made of bed-ticking, hanging round her waist, and drew from it a book.

Moistening her thumb, she turned the leaves, muttering, "La Sevillana, two ounces and a half. I'll lose that money. Pepa la Malagueña . . . nothing, eh? Ah, Hueso de Cochino, La Brasileña . . . ah, here it is! Amparo Vazquez, La Jerezana, three ounces and a half, two pairs of open-work silk stockings, a fan—in all about four ounces.

"Well, that shall run on; I will not charge a centimo of interest, and at my friend's, she's a good woman, though half a gipsy, is the Chavala, you will be comfortable enough."

Amparo shook her head. "Thanks, Doña Ana," she replied. "No, I go not; this man has become all the world to me. I care not if he beats me, neglects me, or if he takes my money. He is my blood, blood of my blood. . . ." She took a pin, and having pricked her arm, drank the bright scarlet drop. Raising her fat white hands to heaven, Doña Ana said: "She loves him bestially . . . strange too when he can hardly speak a word of Christian, and has a pane of glass tied to a string, stuck in his eye, just like a figure in a pantomime."

So she stayed on, and one day Scudamore appeared a little drunk, and rather shabby, telling her that he had spent all his money, and had outstayed his welcome in the fleet.

Instantly the Jerezana borrowed two ounces more from Doña Ana, who, as she gave the money, taking it out of a knotted pocket-handkerchief, which she exhumed from beneath a loose board behind her bed, said with a sigh, "God knows that I was born for the profession that I have followed all my life; I never could say No."

In a room on the second floor of a house in a back lane, of which the Jerezana paid the

rent, Scudamore soon fell into the half-shrinking, half-bullying ways of a man kept by a woman of the kind. By degrees he began to take his meals in Doña Ana's house. The other girls, who did not see him through the magnifying lens of love, all called him Tomasito, in a half-patronising, half-contemptuous way. His clothes got daily shabbier, and by degrees he drifted into keeping the accounts of the establishment. When clients came and he was seated in his shirt sleeves, either learning the guitar, or playing cards with Doña Ana, if they complained about his presence, they were told, "It is only Tomasito, the Jerezana's friend, it does not matter in the least."

She, having him to keep, for it had never come into his head to look for anything to do, had to work hard amongst the clients, to give him clothes to wear and cigarettes to smoke.

When she went, as people say in Spanish, "on the hunt," he used to pass her without a sign of recognition, saying that he must draw the line at speaking to her in the street, as after all he was a gentleman.

Months passed, until one day when he was sitting on the Alameda with the girl, watching the coast of Africa melt into shadow, and the

white houses over in Algeciras turn violet in the last rays of the descending sun, the hills above Gaucin grow purple, and a red glow suffuse the limestone crags of the great fortress rock, a friend who had been at the post office put a letter in his hand.

He read and found that he had inherited some money from a far-off cousin, turned white, then red, and rising from his seat, walked towards the town, the Jerezana following at his heels, with the air of a faithful spaniel that feels its master is displeased with it.

Next day, smoking a big cigar, he paced the deck of a fast liner steaming through the Straits. His glass was in his eye, his hair well flattened to his head with vaseline, brushed back without a parting, showed he had made his toilet carefully. Bending a little to the movement of the ship, the fresh sea air just tinged his cheek with red, giving him a look as of a fine young colonist returning home after a year or two spent in the wilderness.

"Yes," he said to a kindred spirit as they walked to and fro to get an appetite, "the women, blast them, never leave a man alone. I don't know if you saw a tall, dark, Spanish girl talking to me just as we came aboard.

Well, you know, don't you know, I was pretty friendly with her when I was stuck in 'Gib.,' and damn it all, there she was up on the mole with a cow-hair trunk, corded with bass rope, a goldfinch in a cage, tears running down her cheeks and bothering me to take her with me. . . . Good God, a pretty sight I should have looked travelling about, dragging a Spanish whore . . . I like her well enough; but what I say is, Charity begins at home, my boy. Ah, there's the dinner bell!"

Charitable readers, you must take my little story (or perhaps parable) in any way you choose.

Do not forget whilst reading it that charity is a shy-growing plant that often droops in what appears good soil.

At other times she rears her head, almost by stealth, after the fashion of an autumn crocus, which peers so delicately above a growth of grass that would choke hardier plants.

Hope is for fishers with a float, who as they sit, watching it bob about, may chance when they pull in their line, to find the body of a cat, or a blind puppy, in which their hook has stuck, when they had hope of fish.

Faith is the quality of prophets and of those who in its exercise fear not to slay ; but charity is rarer than its two elder sisters, exceeding them in the same way that instinct outgoes reason and leaves it in the mire.

Love, kindness, toleration, whatever charity may be, or if she is compounded of them all, I know not.

All that I do know, is that she is rare, and that her emblem on a sailor's arm is always drawn between the anchor and the cross.

R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM.

CHARITY

"CHARITY," said the Consul, "is often quite unreasoning"; he paused and added, "but so is love, and the two things are one."

In the old Moorish house, built for hot weather, the cold was glacial, and we had drawn the dinner-table into a corner to avoid a leak, from which the water, filtering through the roof, dropped in a chalky stream. Long, milky-looking glasses swung from the ceiling in brass chains, and in them, floating upon oil, burned wicks that gave a fitful light that cast black shadows on the horseshoe arches of the *patio*. Curved flint-locks hooped with brass, with crooked stocks inlaid with ivory, hung on the walls, and Moorish daggers, shaped like scimitars, and bags with fringes, like those an Indian wears upon his moccasins. Bowls of Fez pottery stood here and there, and on the tables and the chairs were heaped up books and papers, with all the flotsam and the jetsam that a solitary man living far off from

kith and kin collects and clings to, striving to fill the void in his life with something tangible.

Outside, the rain descended pitilessly, turning the narrow lanes to muddy streams, upon whose current floated orange-peel, dead rats and heads and feet of fowls.

The call to prayers boomed like a foghorn from a ship bound in fog, and seemed as if it summoned up a watch reluctant to turn out and go aloft.

The Consul, impervious to cold, after the fashion of all those accustomed to the life in a warm climate, where damp and wet are almost welcome after the summer's heat, seemed to consider that his guests shivered for fun, or as in protest against that which every reasonable man endured without a murmur as sent from God, put his feet up upon a chair and said, "Yes, charity is sometimes an unreasoning or an unreasonable thing."

The listeners drew their greatcoats round them and waited for his tale, knowing he was a man who, being thrown upon himself and having nothing else to study but the Moors, observed them as an ornithologist might study some strange bird. Cursing the people every day for their unlikeness to himself and his

ideals, he had become so much accustomed to them in his long residence in the forlorn post to which the Foreign Office had condemned him that he could scarcely have existed amongst other folk, or in another place.

Raising his voice, he called out "Mokh, oh Mokh"; and when a little negro boy appeared, rubbing his eyes with sleep, he told him to bring whisky and then go off to bed. "I bought the little devil," said the Consul, and then, remembering his position, added, "I mean his mother gave him to me in the last outbreak of the smallpox when they all died like flies. I used to vaccinate 'em with some stuff I got across from 'Gib.'; but still it didn't seem to do much good, for they kept dying off so fast that we could scarcely bury 'em. Just about as much good to have done 'em with trade gin, for don't you see there was no way of keeping 'em in the least clean, and that's what does the job." We listened to his theories on therapeutics with the attention that good citizens accord to those in office, and then he wandered back again to where he had begun.

"The more I live amongst the Moors, the less I understand 'em. At times I think I have the key of the enigma, and then I seem to lose

it, and find myself faced up against a wall. Sometimes they seem to have no feeling, and then just when you think they are hardly human, they'll turn right round and do something that a white man would never think of doing, that leaves you wondering at them. I'll tell you of a case."

Outside the wind still whistled, and the water running down the street, roared like a mountain burn. Lighting a cheroot, which he did at the thinner end, explaining to us that no one who had been in India ever did otherwise, he thought a little.

We huddled round the stove, on which occasionally great drops fell from the roof with a sharp hissing sound.

The Consul came back to his theme slowly, just as a ship appears to hesitate a little after she is put about, before her sails draw and she is brought up to her course.

Speaking in that constrained and as if perfunctory way in which so many cultivated Englishmen express themselves, through dread of being natural, he struck into his tale.

"During that outbreak of the smallpox, in which I bought, I mean acquired, that little

devil Mokh, there was a thing I saw that stirred me up a little."

The Consul looked so hard to stir, that we involuntarily smiled. He saw it, and remarked, "Yes, it was curious. You know, the Moors often appear cruel to us, and we to them. For instance, if when I stray about the town I find a starving dog with a leg broken, my impulse is to shoot it, to put it out of pain. A Moor thinks such an act but little short of murder, for he holds that as long as there is life, hope lingers, and Allah holds the keys of life and death, and it is impious to unlock or close, but when he wishes it. Well, just at the corner of this street there lived a widow woman. She had a boy, at that time about twelve, a little ill-conditioned wretch he seemed to me, dirty and wild, and with a scabby head that turned my stomach when I looked at it. Of course, he was his mother's joy, for mothers, Christian or Moorish, are alike, just as alike as cows."

We said "Oh! oh!" although we knew that he was right, and he resumed. "Well, little Abd-er-Rahman, with his scabby head and dirty clothes, did not seem to be a treasure to the ordinary mind. Sometimes he used to hold my horse, and though I told him never to

tie him by the reins, I usually found him with the reins buckled to the grating of a window, and the boy fast asleep. Naturally, when I mounted he used to hold the stirrup, and in his anxiety to put his weight upon it, he used to pull the horse's head away from me, so that it was next to impossible to mount. What he and his mother lived upon was a marvel even to me, accustomed to the Moors. Their house was bare, so I was told, for naturally I never was inside it, but clean, though I suppose not over-sanitary. In fact, a place the smallpox or any other epidemic was certain to invade. The Moors, you know, take no precautions. All is in God's hands. He will send smallpox or withhold it, as it pleases Him, for they believe in Him, just as in England we believe in doctors, and as unreasoningly.

"The widow's boy played about as usual with the other boys. One day I saw him with his friends, playing at a funeral, as boys in Spain all play at bull-fighting. One child was laid upon a board, with four to carry him. The way those little devils sang the chant the Arabs use was wonderful to hear. Born actors are the Moors; but then the funerals went down our street a dozen times a day."

The Consul lit another of his long cheroots, and added in a quiet tone of voice: "I used to go into their houses, and see the bodies. . . . No, not afraid a bit. I don't know why. It used to seem to me it was impossible to catch infection from a Moor, and then, in times like that, even their faith softens a little, and a kind word cheers them, just as it would ourselves. One day Jelali—that's my head man, you know, saddles my horse and goes to market . . . cheats me, of course, but won't allow anyone else to do it—came in and said that a poor woman wished to see me at the door. I went to see her, and she, catching me by the hand, said, 'Consul, I take refuge with you; my son has caught the plague.' Of course I went with her, taking some medicines with me, just to satisfy her. Her son lay on the floor upon a blanket, a mass of blotches, livid and horrible. He moaned a little now and then, but was already dying, as I saw at the first glance. His mother told me that a day or two ago he had come in feverish, and she, thinking it nothing, had sent him down to bathe. When he returned he had been worse, then got delirious, and before midnight was as I saw him, only a mass of sores. Merely to quiet her, I took

a spoon, and opening his mouth tried to force down his throat a little laudanum."

The Consul paused, and made a movement with his hands as of involuntary disgust, as if some detail of the boy's deathbed had occurred to him, and then went on again.

"I never saw such a black, bloated little corpse as Abd-er-Rahman's when I left his mother's house just about daylight, or such a dreary-looking place as their one mud-floored room, with the boy's body lying on the ragged blankets, and his mother swaying to and fro, stupid with misery. I tell you I went home, and had a good stiff tot of whisky, not that I was afraid of the infection, but because the thing had stirred me up a little, as I told you when I began the tale. Next day there was a lot of bother in the office, an English ship had got ashore close to Martin, the port you know, and the captain came and bullied me about the want of lights and the defective charts.

"With one thing and another I forgot about the boy. You see there were so many dying in the place a fellow scarcely had the time to think, and it slipped, somehow, clean out of my head. However, one day, as I was going

for a walk, I passed a tailor sitting sewing at his work. Upon his knees was spread a piece of fine brocade, that stuff the Moors in old times used to make in Fez, with gold threads running through the tissue so thickly that the thing would almost stand if you but stuck it up on edge. In the old days in Spain they called it guexi, but nowadays even the name is lost, for the Moors, as you know, care nothing for the past. When I clapped eyes upon it, I remembered that for a month or two I had bargained for it with the man, and could not bring him to my price.

"I spoke to him, and then after a word or two about the progress of the plague, the doings of the Government in Fez, and things of that kind, just to distract him from the subject, I said quite carelessly, 'Ten dollars for the piece.'

"He looked at me and smiled. 'Consul,' he said, 'this piece of guexi, as you say that it was called in Spain, is not for you, or any other Roman.' He called me Roman, not to say Nazarene, which, as you know, is a contemptuous method of address amongst Mohammedans.

"I asked him why, and he rejoined, half

smiling as he spoke, 'Because you Romans have no belief in God, or His omnipotence.

"'Consul, when little Abd-er-Rahman died, . . . may God remit the balance of your sins for what you did for him, . . . his mother came to me.

"'"Oh, father of the awl," she said to me, "my son is dead. God willed it so, and also that I should be poor, and I have not anything in my possession fit for a winding-sheet." I too was poor, but then as now I had upon my knees this piece of old brocade.

"'Take it, I said, and wrap it round the body of your son, as he lies on the bier, upon his journey to the cemetery. Then bring it back to me, and thus your son will journey through the streets in a befitting style.' She thanked me, snatching at my hand to kiss it, which I prevented, knowing good manners, and in due time she sent me back the winding-sheet.

"'Consul, I trust in Allah.' I took and shook him by the hand, and as I pass him now and then as he sits sewing at his work we look at one another, but seldom speak, except a formal 'la bas' as I pass upon my way. You see, we understand each other." . . .

The Consul stopped, and as we rose to go

he shouted loudly to his men to bring a lantern, but no one answered him, for they had slipped away to bed, leaving him all alone as usual in his bat-infested house, in the dark narrow lane. As we strolled stumbling back to the hotel the rain had stopped, and a few fleecy clouds went racing through the sky. Before the Basha's house the guards were sleeping muffled in their jelabs, and snoring lustily.

When we emerged upon the broad fidàn the moon had risen, and from a side street issued a wedding-party, dancing and firing a stray shot or two.

Their lanterns swung about, just as a ship's masthead light seems to swing, as the long rollers of the north-west trades catch her a little just abaft the beam, their bearers looking like a band of Capuchins, in their white, pointed hoods.

AUNT ELEANOR

THERE are no aunts to-day like my Aunt Eleanor. Either the world is no more fitted for them, or else they are not fitted to the world; but none of them remain.

Scotland and Yorkshire strove together in her blood, making a compound, whimsical and strange, kind and ungracious, foolish and yet endowed with a shrewd common sense, which kept her safe, during the lengthened period of her life, from all the larger follies, whilst still permitting her to give full run to minor eccentricities, both in speech, deed and dress.

Tall, thin, and willowy, and with a skin like parchment, which gave her face, when worked upon by a slight rictus in the nose she suffered from, a look, as if a horse about to kick, she had an air, when you first saw her, almost disquieting, it was so different from anything, or anybody that you had ever met.

She never seemed to age, although no doubt time did not stop the clock for her during the

thirty years she was a landmark in my life. Perhaps it was her glossy, dark brown hair, which, parted in the middle and kept in place by a thin band of velvet, never was tinged with grey, not even in extreme old age, that made her ever young.

Perhaps it was her clothes, which for those five-and-thirty years (I cannot swear it was not forty) were invariable, that made her never change.

Her uniform, for so I styled it, it was so steadfast, was, in the winter, a black silk, sprigged, as she would have said herself, with little trees, and in the summer, on fine days, a lilac poplin, which she called "laylock," surmounted by a Rampore Chudda immaculately white.

Her cap was generally adorned with cherry-coloured ribbons. Perched on her head, as if it were a crown, moral and physical, of virginity, it used to have a strange attraction for me when it trembled, now and then, making the ribbons shake, as she reproved a servant, or signified her disapproval of some necessary change. The youngest of a large family, whose members all were cleverer than she, until death set her free by taking off her sisters, she had been

held a fool. Not that the imputation ever stopped her for a moment from having her own way; but only laid her open to the comments of the other members of the family, which she accepted, just as a shepherd or a sailor always accepts bad weather, without a murmur, and with a sense as of superiority to fate.

In all her sisters the Scottish strain prevailed. They spoke, not in broad Scots, but with the intonation that sounds like the whine a bagpipe gives when the player, after a pibroch, or a lament, allows the bag to empty slowly of the wind. Their mental attitude was that which their stern Scottish faith gave to its votaries. Even in Scotland it is now unknown, leaving the world the poorer by the extinction of a type of mind so much at home with the divinity, that it could venture freely to admonish him if he fell short in any of his deeds, from the full standard of perfection raised by his worshippers. So did an ancient Scottish lady on being told, during the course of a dispute on "Sabbath recreation," that the Lord walked in the fields and ate the ears of corn, not hesitate to say, "I ken that weel, and dinna think the mair of Him for that, so I'm just tellin' ye."

Aunt Eleanor was of another leaven, for in

her composition the Yorkshire blood had overpowered the Scotch. Reared in the lowest section of the English Church, she used to go occasionally into a Methodist or Baptist chapel, alleging that she had no terror of dissent, although it may have been she looked on the adventure as in the light of dissipation, just as an Arab, now and then, might eat a piece of pork, being convinced his faith was steadfast, but wishing, as it were, to taste the wickedness of sin, to make it manifest.

In the same way, her caprice satisfied, Aunt Eleanor returned again to church, but always used to treat the institution as if it were a sort of appanage belonging to the county families. She used to send and ask the clergyman to tell the organist not to pull out the Vox Humana stop, which she alleged made her feel ill, and never to allow his instrument to groan at her as she came into church.

On ritual she was a bar of iron, not liking what she called "highflyers," and stating roundly that for her part she would not mind if the "man" stood up to preach in his shirt-sleeves, as long as they were clean.

These were, as far as I remember, all the religious difficulties Aunt Eleanor had to con-

tend with, for in the practice of her creed she was as upright, kind and charitable a Christian as ever I have met. Not that her faith softened a certain harshness in her mind, that made her singularly harsh to all the failings of her sex in matters sexual.

On those of men, she looked with much more leniency, holding that women always were the tempters, and that no girl had ever gone astray except by her own fault.

Once, and once only, did she almost have the chance to put her doctrines into practice, but then the issue was confused, so that it never was cleared up, whether my aunt was better than her creed, or if she held her Scoto-Yorkshire faith in its entirety. A celebrated lady horse-breaker, of perhaps easy virtue, having come into the street in which she lived, my aunt, to the blank consternation of her friends, prepared to strike up an acquaintanceship, and when remonstrated with, observed: "She may be all you say, my dear, but what a seat she has, and hands like air; she must have learned in a good school, she rides so quietly."

As fortune willed it, the acquaintanceship was never formed, but had it been, my aunt, I

fancy, would have discoursed on snaffles and on curbs, and on that symbol of all equitation, the sacred lipstrap, with as much gusto as she used to do with other of her friends. Strange as it may appear, although a semi-invalid from her birth up, a martyr as she was to violent sick headaches, which in those days were the equivalent of "nerves," she always used to ride.

She and her brother were both born horsemen, riding to hounds, and jealous to a fault. No woman, in my aunt's eyes, could ever ride, that is to say, up to her standard. Either their hands were bad, or else their seats were loose, or if both hands and seats were good, they had no nerve, or as a last resort, rode to attract attention. "You know," she used to say, "Miss Featherstone never was known to jump a fence, unless a man was looking at her. If there was but a butcher's boy she would have risked her neck, although, in that long run, the one I told you of, when we met at the Rising Sun upon Edge Hill, and finished somewhere down in Gloucestershire, she never took a fence, and then came up just as we killed, with several officers, all galloping like tailors on the road."

I hear her now, talking about her celebrated mare, "The Little Wonder," which she declared she never touched with a whip in all her life, but once, and never with the spur. This happened at a fence, at which the mare had swerved; but when she felt the whip, she put her back up and entirely refused. A Frenchman who was following my aunt, passed her, and took his hat off, saying as he passed, "Thank you for whip' your mare. I have followed you a month, but never pass you till to-day." My aunt never related this, but tears rose in her eyes: whether at her own cruelty, or at the Frenchman having passed her, I never could make out.

Horses and hunting were the chief themes of conversation with my aunt, and as she did not care the least for anyone's opinion but her own, her talk ran usually into a monologue, in which she set her theories out, as to which rein should go under which finger, and how good hands consisted in the wrist. "It is all done with a turn of the wrist, my dear, and not by butchering," a theory sound in itself and one which many would be wise to follow, if they had aunts as competent as mine to teach them the right way. Years only added to my aunt's

eccentricity, and as she lived in times when gentlewomen enjoyed ill-health, no one was much astonished when one day she definitely took to a couch, laid in the drawing-room window, from which she could survey the road and watch the people going to the meet.

For years she lay there, only getting up on Sunday to go to church, which she did, either in a Bath chair, or else in Jackson's fly, for she averred that only Jackson in the whole town of Leamington could drive with decency. The other flymen started with a jerk, or sawed their horses' mouths in a way that set my aunt's nerves tingling, and used to make her open the window and expostulate in a high, quavering key. Even the trusted Jackson had to submit to adverse criticism now and then, both of his driving and of his horse's legs.

It used to be a curious sight to see the semi-invalid, leaning upon her maid, dressed in her invariable black, sprigged silk gown—she would have fainted to have heard it called a dress—a curtain bonnet on her head, a parasol ringed with small flounces and jointed in the middle, in her hand, walk down the steps of her front door and stand before the fly.

Turning towards her maid, she used to say,

"Baker, lend me your arm a moment," and then advancing with the half valetudinarian, half sporting air that she affected, open the horse's mouth.

"Well, Jackson," she would say, "you have got a young one there. I think he would make a better hunter than some of those I see trotting down to the meet. They breed them far too long-backed nowadays, not like the well-ribbed-up, short-legged, well-coupled-up ones that I remember when I hunted as a girl with the Fitzwilliam hounds."

Jackson would touch his hat, and answer, "You know a 'orse, Miss, and this one, 'e is a 'orse, he ought by rights to be a gentleman's."

Then with an admonition as to not starting with a jerk, my aunt would get into the fly, Baker having first put in a coonskin cushion with the head on, made in the fashion of a pillow-case.

Into it when my aunt had put her feet, arranged her shawl and her belongings carefully about her, just as if she were going on a journey in the wilds, the fly rolled off upon its way, with my aunt looking out now and then to criticise the driver and the horse. After having lain upon her couch ten years or so,

one day she suddenly got up. The ensuing week she went out hunting, dressed in her long Victorian habit, tall hat and veil, and with a boa round her neck. She hunted on, riding much harder than most members of the hunt, but in a modest and retiring way, and followed by her groom. He, a staid lad, who had been brought up with Lord Fitzwilliam as an under-strapper in the hunt stables, always used to say: "Them as rides with my lady 'as to know 'ow to ride; but then I passed my youth with Lord Fitzwilliam. They was a serious family, all rode to 'ounds, and all of 'em rode blood 'orses, from the old lord down to the little gals."

My aunt continued riding to extreme old age, and then went to the meets driven in a fly, of course, by someone she could put her trust in, though Jackson long had passed away, to drive perhaps in some particular limbo, where the shades of Captain Barclay, old Squire Osbaldiston, and Sir Tatton Sykes drove shadowy chariots, dressed in their "down the road" coats, with a coach and horses on the big pearl buttons, just as they had appeared in life, all with straws in the corners of their mouths, and with that air of

supernatural knowledge of the horse which they all had on earth.

My aunt, I fancy, could she have chosen for herself, would have gone to some heaven, half stable and half country house, with just a sprinkling of Low Church divines flying about in black Geneva gowns and white lawn bands, to give an air of having been redeemed, to the select, but rather scanty, inmates of the place when they sat down to dine.

Poor lady, all her life was one long tutelage, till her last sister died. Then when she had peeped below the blinds to satisfy herself that the hearse horses all were sound, and none wore housings, a thing that she detested, saying she could not bear to see a horse in petticoats, she found herself quite free.

After the fashion of the times, she did not go herself to see her sister buried, but sat at home and read the Burial Service, although a member of the family averred on his return he caught her dozing with the Church Service closed upon her lap, and *Market Harboro'* in her hand. Years passed, and she became a kindly tyrant in her old age, making her young relations happy and terrified by her ungracious kindness to them all.

Lastly, in a Bath chair, she used to have herself dragged up and down the Holly Walk or the Parade, criticising horses and riders most relentlessly, and now and then making the chairman stop before the shops where pictures were for sale, and after looking at them most intently, usually saying, "'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view," a piece of criticism which she thought final, as applied to art in all its branches, even to photographs.

She died as she had lived, after arranging her own funeral with the undertaker, and enjoining on him to be sure that the hearse was not started with a jerk, and all his beasts were sound.

He left her presence snorting a little in a bandanna pocket-handkerchief, remarking: "Well, I never saw such a lady in my life, a plucked one to be sure, I'll bet a suvering."

My aunt rests quietly under some elm trees in Old Milverton churchyard.

Many old Scottish ladies lie round about the grave where my aunt sleeps under a granite slab now stained a little with the weather, imparting to the churchyard a familiar air, as of the tea-parties that she once used to give, when they all sat together, just as they now lie

closely in the ground, to keep each other warm. The rooks caw overhead, and when the hounds pass on a bright November morning, I hope she hears them, for heaven would be to her but a dull dwelling-place if it contained no horses and no hounds.

LA ALCALDESA

"COSSART was talking to me once," said Mansel,—"you remember him? the man who was a diver and whom you gave a horse to in Mercedes, you must remember him; he was a cook."

I did, and recollected giving him the horse, a little, dark brown, with a white face, and four white feet. I gave him, as it happened, with the greater pleasure, or at least with a greater absence of responsibility, because the horse was not my own, but a stray animal who had attached himself to my *tropilla*. The brute was very hard to mount, and when at last you had got with difficulty on his back, was not worth a red cent.

"Well," Mansel said, "Cossart was talking about matrimony the other day, up at the French Cooks' Club in Sackville Street. He said that it was strange so few of us had married, for marriage, as he understood the institution, was a good thing for men, as he

said, *sur le retour;* but that, for his part, he thought himself immune on account of something that had happened to him, back in the 'seventies, in Paraguay.

"Ah! here is Cossart," said my friend, and the *chef* came into the room, dressed in the long frock-coat, white waistcoat, bell-mouthed trousers, and black crêpe de Chine necktie tied in a bow, which were a sort of uniform to him, after his business hours. In one hand was his hat, curly and shiny, and in the other his thin, black stick, to which a woman's leg in ivory, figured as crutch.

He drew a large silk pocket-handkerchief from his breast-pocket, and, flourishing it, diffused a scent either of Moss Rose or of Jockey Club, throughout the room. He asked for "Gomme" and then for "Cassis," and when the waiter of the club denied all knowledge of them, called for Italian and for French Vermouth, mixed them together and added bitters and a little lemon juice and curaçoa, sowed powdered sugar on the top of all, put in a lump of ice, and said:

"This is *la boisson Cossart*, my own receipt; it tastes like nothing else on earth."

I well believed him; and he went on:

"You remember in my bar in Buenos Aires it was my chief support. One drink, a half-Bolivian. Emilienne, you remember her, had a flat piece of marble, on which to ring them. Never a piece escaped her. Just as I almost had her trained, paf! there passes a Brazilian with the sack, and she, of course, went with him. How quick she was, how honest, I mean French honest, a harder thing by far for one in her position, than mere money proof. Clever, too, and knowing more than *père et mère.* The Brazilian! such a *macaco* as he was, *coiffé d'un Panama;* his gloves immense and *couleur sang de bœuf. Ouf* . . . a Brazilian . . . well, well, she finished, I have heard, quite nicely, and married a rich slave-owner up in Bahia. My countrywomen always finish up like that, no matter how they may have lived.

"Not that Emilienne . . . *pauvre fille,* had had a very stormy life. I got her from the house that you remember, 1, 2, 3 Cerito, where she had only been a month or two after a *malheur* that she had had at home. *Le gibier* always was my *faible.* Ha! ha! yes, I remember that print I had behind the bar, called 'Gibier d'Eau,' with two girls bathing in the sea."

Mansel cut in: "'Tis strange Emilienne got married and not you. What was it you were telling me about something that happened to you up in Paraguay?"

Cossart lay back and let his heavy, fleshy eyelids fall like a vulture's, over his black eyes, set down *la boisson Cossart*, and drummed a little with his huge and hairy hand upon the table by his side.

Over his chin, close-shaved and blue, and on his cheeks, a sort of shadow seemed to run, of greyness, as when a man looks back into his past.

He shivered slightly, and then, opening his eyes, remarked:

"Ah! yes, that's what you call somebody walking on your grave, and what the Spaniards call *la Muerte Chiquita*, the Little Death, eh?"

Then he began to talk, at first with difficulty, as if the springs of recollection were a little rusty, and then, as they became, as it were, lubricated, more fluently.

"You know," he said, "that I have had a chequered life, diver in Buenos Aires, and in Mercedes, bass singer in the choir."

He stopped and sang a note or two that made the very windows rattle, and then re-

marking: "Not so bad, eh, for a restaurateur," went on: "A chapter of my life you do not know, when I was up in Paraguay. I drifted there as cook on board a river steamer, the *Iguazú*, I think. Not bad the berth, and the pay good, and when I found myself ashore without a penny in Asuncion, often regretted the snug galley where I could cook and think about the future. I was young then, and although now things go pretty well with me, I always think about the past. Well, you know Asuncion, not much to do there, at least in those days, no theatres, only one *café*, and that kept by a German. His wife was French, and pretty. I used to go and sit and look at her, not that she was the only woman in Asuncion, for you remember, there were thirteen to a man in those days, but bah! *à peine des femmes*, poor creatures, hungry and ragged, and all smoking big cigars. How it fell out, I can't recall, but by degrees we became friends . . . you need not smile, nothing but friends, upon my word; yes, *foi de Cossart*. The husband, an unreasonable man, *avec une tête de mari*, perhaps thought otherwise, and one day, seeing me talking to his wife, advised himself to call me *cochon de français* or something of the sort. I answered

him in the same kind, and then, why, a *molestia*, as we used to say. The last I saw of him, he looked not very pretty, lying on the floor beside a broken chair. What heads they have, those Germans. My first shot grazed his arm. His passed my face and smashed a looking-glass. I jump for him, and fetch him with my pistol between the eyes, and then run for the door. As I passed through, the *clientèle* was mostly underneath the tables, except a few who stood holding their pistols, ready, as a man does when a *barulla de Jesú Cristo* happens to occur. I knew he was not dead, and that the thing would soon blow over, but thought it was full time to change the scenery. So, as I wandered up and down the streets between the orange gardens and past the sandy, open spaces covered with castor-oil plants, beyond that *rancho* that you must remember, which had a knot of pawpaw trees, where the road turns to Dr. Stewart's *quinta*, I met a friend of mine.

"He was an Argentine *tropero*, one Aniceto Lopez, well-doing, whom I had known in Carmen de Arreco, province of Buenos Aires, and who had drifted up to Paraguay, only the Lord knows how.

"Well, Aniceto was a good fellow, and when I told him of the trouble I had had about the German, he laughed like steam and said:

"'*Bueno*, you come with me to Corrientes and help me fetch a troop of cattle for the Brazilian troops: *Le cheval, vous savez, c'était ma passion.* After *le gibier* it is the only passion that I have found endures, for, as yet, I am not old enough to have experienced *le manie des cannes*, which is the last mania, so they say, in Paris, that a man ever has.'

"Lopez had lots of horses, and I went out and bought *bombachas*, you remember, the wide trousers, black merino, eh? a poncho and a saddle, and boots, of course of patent leather, with an eagle in the front stitched in red thread, and with his wings just disappearing round the leg.

"No, Mansel, not a lasso," said the story-teller, "*pas si bête*, I went, so to speak as a deck hand, for any one can help to drive a herd of cattle when it is once upon the road. When I was ready we started, going down by the trail that passes just behind Lambaré, crossing the Tebicuari somewhere near Villa Franca, right through the Estero Ñembucú and so by Paso de la Patria, across

the Paraná. Oh, that Estero Ñembucú, what a place, water until you cannot rest, and still more water. Then a little mud, long grass that you hardly shove your horse through, and then more water and more mud. Mosquitoes, yes, and every living devilish bug, and hot and steamy, and you seated upon your horse, crying out, '*Tropa*,' '*Vuelta toro*,' whirling your *rebenque* round your head, and splashing through the mud. That was the kind of day I passed with Aniceto Lopez, each time we crossed the accursed Estero, driving the cattle to Asuncion. At night, if we could get to a dry patch, we had to ride for two hours each, slowly all round the herd, to keep the beasts from straying off; at daybreak, if you had had what Mansel here would call the morning watch, you changed your horse and slowly jogged along the road, dozing and swearing at the lagging beasts, till it was time to halt and take a siesta, and then jog on once more.

"You will laugh, but sometimes as I sit in the sanctum of the club, I mean the room that is reserved to me (the only artist in the place), thinking my menus out, my mind goes back to the old Estero Ñembucú.

"Why? you say, eh? Well, perhaps for the

same reason that we think more often on the women who have made us suffer than upon those who have made us happy by their love.

"Well, well, my friend Aniceto Lopez used to laugh at me a good deal now and then when one of his accursed horses gave me a fall on a cold morning, and say I was a *maturango*, but I made several trips with him, and showed him how to make a tolerable stew out of jerked beef and mandioca meal. You soaked the beef in orange juice . . . and . . . anything was better than that abominable *churasco* they used to eat upon the road.

"When we had passed the Estero we used to halt a day, or sometimes two, for time was what we had the most of, to rest the horses, let the herd feed, and wash our clothes. How well I see those camps . . . eh, Daddy Mansel, do you remember them?"

Mansel, who had sat silent, plunged also deep in recollection, looked up and said:

"A dozen of them, Cossart, but I cannot somehow imagine you lying stretched out under a tree and eating jerked beef and mandioca, and sleeping in the sun."

"Necessity," rejoined the *chef*, taking the straw out of a long Italian cigar, "makes

us acquainted with strange comestibles; as to bed-fellows, the stranger that they are the better, that is, when one is young."

Having enunciated this opinion with an air of having added to the world's wisdom, and to Mansel's great disgust—not that he was a hypocrite, but being English did not like men to speak their minds on such a subject—the *chef* continued:

"Ideal days we had, camped underneath the trees, the woods on every side, running like capes run out to sea into the little plain, set about here and there with groups of yatais . . . you know, those scrubby palms. An air of being out of the world, alone with Nature. *Mon Dieu*, they say a man when he grows old falls into anecdotage; but to philosophise is worse. In those days you remember that in Paraguay there were no men, that is, one man to thirteen women. Lopez, you know, was killed on the last horse in the republic, a little roan, I think.

"*Les femmes*, yes, but they were a danger we used to fly from then, and even Aniceto's cattle men, after the first trip, would never willingly sleep in an Indian village, *c'était trop terrible.* I stood it pretty well; the French,

you know, were never backward in such matters, and one has *amour propre*, but the odds were too great.

"Don Aniceto's *capataz*, a Correntino, a huge, great fellow, *un solide gaillard*, as we say, tried it and failed . . . we left him in Asuncion, in hospital.

"All the *peones* would begin, and then after a trip or two get shy and sleep out in the woods, or on the plains beside their horses, rather than face the Indian women in the towns. When I first heard about it I thought it was a joke, but one experience did me for my life. After that, I had a plan. Our road led to the south of Caapucú, luckily missing all the villages but one . . . its name I can't recall. How well I see them though, built round a square about two hundred yards across. The long, low huts ran continuously, so that they looked more like a tennis-court than houses fit for men. One broad verandah ran in front of all of them, supported on great beams of some hard wood or other, perhaps canela or some other kind of wood.

"The roofs were either thatched or roofed with old red tiles, made by the Jesuits. The walls were dazzlingly white. The pavement of

the verandah either was earth beaten hard and polished, or else great blocks of wood. The church stood at the east end of the square. It too was built of wood, but wood to last all time. No storm, no rain, not even the white ants, had any *prise* upon it. The bells were good. Good water, air and bells, the proverb says. The Jesuits certainly did well in Paraguay. No, no, I am not a clerical, you need not laugh; but render unto Cæsar. What work they must have had to get these bells through the primeval woods. Faith, strong enough to move a bullock-cart out of a mud-hole, I should think. The grass that grew inside the square was green . . . greener than Ireland, more like the strip of green inside the reef on islands I have seen in the Pacific. 'Twas curious to see the inside of the church. The images made by the Indians, the gold still fresh; the gallery, in which sat the musicians. Some of their instruments were left, with the strings all broken and tied up with strips of hide. The people played on them upon church festivals, and when I came to know the place, I helped them sometimes by singing in the choir. You know, I had a voice, *basso cantante*, and singing in the choir was an old trade of mine . . . do, re,

mi, fa . . . ha, not bad the *ut de poitrine*. I still can catch him, eh? How pastoral it was; so quiet, nothing but now and then a flight of parrots chattering, or a macaw sometimes sailed by and screamed. At times I used to think that I would settle down and pass my days in Santa Tecla; that was the name the village had, I think.

"I am not strong upon the Scriptures, but when the girls and women used to go down at evening to the stream to fetch the water, I used to think about Rebecca at the well, or Ruth and Boaz, *c'était si pastorale*.

"How quietly they walked, each with a water-jar upon her head, shaped like an amphora.

"Women and girls, and girls and women, all dressed in white, that is, all *en chemise*, with their hair cut square across the forehead and hanging down their backs. Only a boy or two and an old man or so, but what were those amongst so many? Women did everything, they tilled the fields, rang the church bells at eventime, for just at sunset everybody prayed, just as the Jesuits had taught their ancestors. What animals they had, the women tended. In the church they had some kind of prayers

or other upon festivals. My friends, the *mise en scène* was quite ideal, a perfect Arcady. The first time that we stopped there, when we had got well camped, and I was free to look about, I went down to the village, leading my horse, for though my passion was the horse, I had had about enough of him, for the last week or two.

"Just as I passed the well, a woman stood there filling her water-jar. *Quelle femme!* Tall, rather stout, but not too stout, only a gracious embonpoint, fair, for a Paraguayan, that is, the skin . . . her hair, of course, was black.

"She looked at me and smiled, a natural thing to do, for I was young then, and as I said, men were so scarce, there were not any, even for a remedy, as the Spaniards say.

"So, when she smiled, I smiled, and asked her if I should help her with her water-jar. From that, we soon were friends, and as we walked back to the village, she swaying lightly with the water-jar upon her head, I touched her hand, and we began to talk. It seemed her father and her husband both were killed, her brother missing after some fight or other, and she was left alone. The other women of the village called her 'La Alcaldesa,' that is, the mayoress, and by degrees had taken to

regard her as the chief woman of the place. As she talked on, telling me about this thing and of that, we came to where she lived. She asked me to come in. I followed her, just as a horse trots after a bell mare. Her house was bare of everything, and all the furniture she had was a hide *catré*, an old chair or two, and a few pictures of the saints. A hammock swung between the pillars of the verandah, with its long cotton fringes, and after having talked a little and drunk a *maté* with cold water, after the Paraguayan fashion of those days, I went and sat in it, keeping it swinging with one foot, and smoking a cigar.

"As I swung in the hammock, smoking, for La Alcaldesa never let the sacred fire of Vesta out, handing me small cigars fit for a man . . . you remember that in Paraguay the women smoked cigars as big as carrots—the night came on without a twilight . . . day and then darkness in a quarter of an hour. The fireflies flitted round the trees, the bats flew noiselessly about . . . I had to scare one from my horse's neck . . . the frogs croaked, and the moon outlined the shadows of the palm trees by the church, upon the grass. *Quoi; un vrai scène de théâtre*, but better somehow, either because

you had not got to pay your entry money or because you were yourself an actor in the scene.

"You fancied that mysterious things were going on in the thick wall of forest that ringed about the town, that is, the village, the *capilla* as they called it, and when a white-robed figure crossed in the moonlight, either from house to house, or right across the square, it looked as if the opera of *Norma*, or of *Poliuto*, were going to begin."

He paused to light a cigarette, holding his ebony stick between his legs with its white crutch shaped like a woman's leg, which, as he said, "gave him ideas," and then, blowing a hurricane of smoke down both his nostrils, resumed.

"That evening Aniceto Lopez and the herd, the trip, and everything went quite out of my head. The Alcaldesa called a girl who took my horse to water, and then, unsaddling it, cut down some bunches of *pindó* with a machete, and tied him up outside the door. Our supper was, if I remember right, nothing but oranges and mandioca with a little chipa, that is, bread made from cassava pulp. I thought, as I sat eating, after all, it is far more artistic . . . for

I too am an artist, to make no effort with your food, and eat just like the other animals, fruit and such things, than to cook badly as they do here, amongst you insularies. As we were eating, women came and looked in, and sometimes said a word or two in Guarani. Sometimes they only stared, as cannibals might stare at a young, well-fed missionary out in La Nouvelle, or the New Hebrides. Although, of course, I did not understand a word they said . . . I saw how the wind blew, either by intuition or *dans ma qualité de français, voyez-vous?* Next morning, just a little before light, the Alcaldesa got up and prepared *maté*. A girl took down my horse to water, bathed him and returned dripping herself, looking just like *une néréide*, with her long, black hair upon her shoulders, and her chemise her only garment, clinging round her legs. I felt a little like a *nouvelle mariée* when women looked into the door, smiled and said something to the Alcaldesa . . . always the same thing, for I could hear the words, although I could not grasp the sense. Somehow I did not like to ask her what it was they said . . . though, *bigre*, I am not shy, but it seemed somehow as if I had arrived at l'Ile de Tulipatam or some

such place where women do the love-making . . . *oui, c'était gênant tout de même*, for all those little Paraguayan girls devoured me with their eyes."

Mansel looked at him as a man looks at a five-legged sheep, and though he knew the *chef* to be a man of courage, generous and kindly to the marrow of his bones, the restless strip of sea that cuts our island off from all the world seemed to extend itself between him and his friend, not in his view of life, but in the way he spoke about the view.

The *chef*, perceiving it, said :

"*On est bel homme, ou on ne l'est pas, mon cher*, those little Paraguayans would have eaten me if they could. Man doth not live by love alone, you say. That is so, but it makes a good *entrée*, if you have other things to eat. . . . I speak *en chef* you know, having some knowledge both of cookery and love.

"Well, well . . . a high old time . . . and during the three days we camped at Santa Tecla, my friend Don Aniceto saw but little of me. La Alcaldesa treated me *en prince*, loving me, as you remember, Mansel, the Paraguayan women loved, as if the world and love were to go on forever and a day. I often think that

they were right, for after all, forever is a word that no one understands. Had it not been for her, I rather think I should have come as badly out of the three days as did some of Don Aniceto's *peones*, who struggled back to camp, with faces long as a male mule's, surrounded by a band of white-clad girls, all of whom seemed to have a sort of right of property in them in some mysterious way.

"We started on the trail—luckily there was no more Estero to go through—at daybreak. The horses were all fresh, the cattle difficult to drive, Don Aniceto in a massacring humour, and the whole country looking like a half-evaporated sea, bathed in the thin, white mist, which rises in the morning in those latitudes and hangs about the edges of the woods, like a white winding-sheet.

"When I had got my horse in hand, after his first wild plunges, I turned, and, looking back, saw the tall figure of the Alcaldesa, standing at her door, with her eyes fixed on me, just as a woman stands, looking at a disappearing ship, out at a harbour's mouth. *Mes amis, c'était dur*, I was her ship; and as I watched her, her head fell forward on her hands."

The *chef* blew his nose loudly in a Madras handkerchief, twisted his moustache, and in response to Mansel's question if he had ever seen La Alcaldesa afterwards, rejoined:

"Yes, often; in fact ours was a kind of intermittent honeymoon each time I passed by the *capilla* . . . I used to stay with her. *Une bonne, brave fille, va, donc.* . . . I often thought that I would marry her and settle down. However, it was *trop bête*, to settle down—to what? Certainly she was handsome . . . pale, with black hair, tall and well made, and with a little . . . *fossette* just above one knee . . . the left, I think, to ravish you. No, not the least idea of cookery, it was humiliating to me . . . but on the other hand, loving and kind, not the least interested, and *passionnée* . . . well, to a fault. At times, I think I hear the pounding of the Indian corn in the tall mortar and the soft whirring of the insects' wings amongst the orange trees, outside her house . . . at times . . . yes, *sacré matin*, I think I will go back to Paraguay before I die and see if she still lives. . . . *Ouf!* it has cost me a good sigh to tell you this. . . . *Les femmes, les femmes, ça vous abîment un homme . . . foi de restaurateur.*"

AN HIDALGO

TALL, wry-necked, and awkwardly built, with a nose like a lamprey and feet like coracles, Don Saturnino Vargas y Arispe was a type of man that you can only see in Spain, or, as he would have said, "the Spains," and perhaps apologised, then added, "but all that ended with the war." It may have ended as he said, but, none the less, even before the war, the type was never so complete in Cuba, Puerto Rico, or the Philippines, as in the mother of the Spains. In the lost colonies, perforce, men came in contact with the affairs of life, and thus became more like mankind at large, and less original. In Spain, and especially in Asturias, Don Saturnino's native land, they had become beings so much apart that it was easier by far to make a European out of a Russian, Turk, Armenian, or Jew, than of a native of the land, over which flies the blood-and-orange flag.

Timid and arrogant at the same time, and quite devoid of any kind of fear, except of

being thought ridiculous, which naturally was the one thing he never could escape from, he had inherited from a long line of hungry ancestors a certain uprightness of thought, which neither training nor his false view of every side of life could quite eradicate. If fate had been more kind, he should have lived in some old house, buried in chestnut trees, deep in the hills of Sátandér. His arms and those of his illustrious ancestors, illustrious by never having done much harm to anyone, would have been sculptured in a creamy, yellowish stone in high relief above the door. The maize fields would have flowed like a great sea of green (yellow in autumn) almost up to his gate. There would have been a wild, neglected garden, in which some aloes, a bush of blue veronica, some purple irises and a few ixias strove with the weeds for life. A great magnolia would have reared its dome of flowers, just at the end of the long, glass-covered passage, which led out from the sitting-room, and the domain most likely would have had an old, grey wall, bulging and full of chinks, from which peered lizards, and with great tufts of Venus' navelwort and mullein, springing from out the stones.

A patch of oak copse and a patch of vines would have formed part of the Asturian paradise, and in the little plot of kitchen garden, great pumpkins slowly would have ripened in the sun. Outside the wall there would have been a pine wood, at the edge of which in the sparse grass, blue gromwells twinkled, and at the top, where the wood ended and the heathy plain began, a little Calvary, with its three crosses and its winding stair, would have alternately been sealed in icicles, or sweltered in the sun. Sleek, yellow oxen would have ploughed, swaying about just as a man sways walking, muffled in a cloak, whilst the rude, wooden carts with wicker sides, passed lazily along the sandy tracks, with a harsh screech as the great wooden wheels, which never had been greased, slowly and painfully revolved. Men would have trodden out the grapes in the great tank under the trellising of vines, and women washed upon the river-banks. High in the silent air a quavering song would have ascended from the fields, to be re-echoed from the wine vat or the river-bank, and haunt the mind just as the croaking of the frogs on a hot night within the tropics, once heard, dwells in the ear for life, This sort of world would have

been just as suited to the Hidalgo as is a stone to an apothecary's eye, as he himself might have observed sententiously, but an untoward fate had ordered differently.

Sent to the "court" in early youth, to a small clerkship in the Custom House, by slow degrees he had risen to be chief clerk, and then had been promoted to full charge in little towns, such as Mondoñedo, Lugo, Brañuelas and Astorga, places in which he had passed a melancholy life in lodgings, eating at the hotel, but which experience gave him the opportunity to remark that he had seen a good deal of the world. This he believed most fervently, although the little towns were as much like each other as are two groups of low, black Arab tents out on the Sáhara; but he belonged to that old-fashioned, fast disappearing class of Spaniards, who never travelled during the whole course of their lives more than a mile or two beyond the place where they were born. Just as a mule's fate is to drag a cart, so the Hidalgo was one of those destined to sit upon high stools, and pass their lives in entering figures in a book, till their hair falls and all their teeth decay, at the same dreary task.

In the same way, a willing mule receives

more blows than any other in the team, so does the good employee have less opportunity to rise, and the Hidalgo was no exception to the rule. At forty, after long years of faithful service, and a life passed in boarding-houses, he found himself head of the Customs in a little town upon the coast. His pay was miserable, his outlook circumscribed, and even that still more restricted by his excessive patriotism and his religious views.

Needless to say he was a Catholic, not that he troubled much about the dogmas of the Church, or his religious duties, so that, had he not been a Spaniard, he might have found a way out of the prison in which his spirit was confined. As it was, like many of his kind, to him religion was so much a part of the one country in the world (that is of course the country where he lived), that to discuss it would have been as strange as if one morning he had found himself unable to speak Christian, or heard that he was rich.

Everything new was painful to him, and though he saw at once that the electric light was better than a wick floating in a brass cup in evil-smelling oil, and that a train was far more comfortable than was the cart and its

long train of mules, its tilt of straw, and hammock swinging underneath the axles, with a dog sitting in it and snarling at the passers-by, in which he first had come up from Asturias to Madrid, he did not reason on the facts. Thus he assumed, not without profit to himself in some degree, all that is most material in progress, but took good care that not an atom of the soul of the condition of affairs, out of which progress grew, should ever enter to his mind. So does an Arab pass at a jump from a long, flint-lock gun, hooped round the barrel with silver or with brass, to a repeating rifle of the most modern kind. He buys the rifle, which to him is the sum total of European culture, while steadfastly rejecting everything of our life, which is at variance with his creed. So the Hidalgo still remained as far removed from modern thought, when seated in the train, as he was in his youth, jogging along the roads upon a mule.

In some respects he was still further off, for in his youth he did not hate that which he never heard of; but now he loathed that which he felt was stronger than himself, though he would sooner far have died than have admitted

it. He used to praise the writers of the "epoch of our glory," though without reading them, as when he did, their realism was a rude shock to his alambicated taste. Novels, in which the men were brave, the women virtuous, and Spain appeared set in a haze of glory, midway between the heavens and the earth, were his chief pabulum. From them he took his views of life, of art, and everything as if they were inspired. The heroes in his books all praised Murillo, calling him divine, but of Velazquez they spoke slightingly, calling him too mechanical and a mere *practicón*, that is, a man proficient in his art, but not original. The Hidalgo did the same, although it is likely that he had never seen the works of either of them, except in oleographs. Still, in the course of time, as he was not a fool, he saw that even Spain was altering, and an uneasy feeling grew on him that it was possible he was on the wrong road and going down the hill. He might have changed his point of view had not the war with the United States thrown him back on himself, bringing out in him all the best and the worst of his strange character.

Chief of the Customs in the land-locked town, with its long winding harbour, shielded

by islands at the mouth, remote in the north-west of Spain, on every side were memories of the past to feed his melancholy. Memories of Spain's departed glory rose upon his view, in the grim citadel, under which the lichen-covered roofs of the old, slab-paved town nestled and straggled up the hill. In the decaying stone-faced forts upon the shore, brass cannons lay beside their carriages, around their barrels clustered serpents, cast in relief, about the touch-holes were the arms of Spain, with an imperial crown. Far up the harbour, under the heath-clad, vine-edged shores of the great inland lake, slumbered the fleet of the galleons from Cartagena, sunk by their admiral to save themselves from Drake. In the clear waters of the bay, they just were visible, after a long calm, lying like sleeping sheep out on a moor, beneath their mounds of sand. Tradition had it that their commander had perished at his post, going down, standing on the poop, waving the flag of Spain.

On holidays, mounted upon a mule, which he rode gravely, as it had been a war-horse, and shielded from the sun and wind alike in his brown cloak, he used to ride out to the spot, dismount, carefully make

a cigarette, light it, drink down the smoke, expel it with a rush from both his nostrils just as the vapour issues from a *solfatára*, and reconstruct the scene. It stirred him powerfully, and as he sat, watching the vessels sink, whilst the false heretics were baffled of their prey, his sordid life was blotted out, and he felt sure that once again Spain would prevail and God be glorified. The old-world province and the decaying town, the country, with its legends of the past (did not the Tardo, that strange lubber fiend, still issue out at sundown, to fright the youths and maidens if they loitered over-much upon the roads, returning from the *romerias?*), must have done much to strengthen his beliefs, and stir his patriotism. Were-wolves and witches filled the people's talk, and as he walked under the arches of the Plaza Consistoriál, he must have almost felt he had gone back to his Asturian home. In his position, fortune was secure, had he but cared to grasp it, for from time immemorial the Custom House had been a gold mine to anyone appointed to the post.

Men sent there poor returned home rich after a few years' service, just as a Moorish

Caid enters his government on a thin horse and followed by a rout of starvelings, but leaves it wealthy and a made man for life. The Hidalgo's friends all thought his luck had changed, holding quite naturally, that he would do as others did, and put his boots on, as the saying has it, in the established way. Once entered on the duties of his post, they found out their mistake. Accounts were audited, and every penny that came in had to be checked and then transmitted to Madrid. His critics were dumbfoundered, and his friends said there was a cat of some kind shut up in the bag, for none of them believed in any honesty in public life, although in private all were honourable men. Had he but pocketed the money all would have passed without much comment, and men have envied him his opportunities, rejoiced to find that after all he was as they were, and giving them the chance to shake a moralising finger and say "We told you so."

Vigo became too hot for him when it leaked out that his sole purpose was to help the Treasury with funds to carry on the war, not that the citizens were not imbued with patriotism, so far as shouting was concerned, or

making speeches, but to send money to Madrid, where they knew that it would be stolen by the officials in the Treasury, appeared to them both as a madness and a rejection of that local patriotism so strong in Spaniards' minds. Some thought him mad and quoted the old saw, "Make yourself a redeemer and you will be crucified," and others thought he was a rogue who had hit upon some novel kind of fraud, and half respected him. After the truth about the miserable campaign had thoroughly leaked out, he went about dejected, in fashion of a man who has seen everything he once held in esteem, fall crumbling to the ground.

Back in Madrid, after his ill-timed sally into patriotism, he found himself still entering figures in a book, although a little better paid than in his younger days. In the long hours of idleness which are inevitable in public offices, he set about to think. Having reviewed his life, he found that to be honest he would have to change all his convictions and ideas and all his prejudices. The books he had admired he saw were rubbish, the pictures wretched, even on politics a doubt crept in and made him miserable. He saw at once

the precipice on which he stood, looked down into its depths and turned away for good. Clearly he saw his view of life and faith would have to be remodelled, and felt himself unequal to the task, and all it signified.

For a brief space he plunged into what he called pecuniary love, but returned always from his excursions to the side chapels of the Paphian goddess, weary and sick at heart. Although his fortunes had improved a little, and he was recognised as an official to be depended on for work, but not of course after his escapade at Vigo to be advanced to be the head of a department, he still lived at a boarding-house, partly from lack of energy to change, partly for company. His chief delight was to sit talking with the keeper of the boarding-house—a tall and withered-looking woman from Galicia, who had been, according to herself, the daughter of a general, but had come down in life through the bad government prevailing in the land. This of course appealed to the Hidalgo, as it does usually to all his countrymen, who like to rail upon their Government just as a man will rail upon his wife, but yet endure her to the last day

of a long life and suffer her caprice. Hours used to pass as they sat talking about their ungovernable land, the dearth of patriotism, and the venality of those in power and in place, in the true Spanish way. At times the Hidalgo would take up the defence of one or other minister, but the general's daughter always was able to bring forward some damning vice to shake his confidence. Not that he was a fool, or really thought that every public man throughout all Spain was venal or a rogue, but the desire to talk to somebody was strong in him, after his dreary day.

How long the Hidalgo might have gone on, attending to his work by day and in the evening listening to his landlady's conversation, is difficult to say, had he not happened on an afternoon to look up to a window, on the way from his office to his home, almost by accident.

A girl was leaning on the window-sill, and she gazed into the street. He thought her beautiful. Her hair was black and coarse, but plentiful, her forehead low, and her eyes black and jetty-looking, so dark they were unfathomable, but yet giving the look of not perhaps having much to fathom, when you had sounded them. She

wore a dressing-jacket of white *piqué*, not over-clean, but open at the neck, and as she gazed into the street, biting the stalk of a red rose which she drew now and then almost up to her mouth and then let fall again till it hung resting on her chin, she smiled at the Hidalgo and, opening her lips, let the rose fall into the street. Stooping, he picked it up, holding it awkwardly, after the fashion of a man unused to love affairs. So little practised was he in such matters that he was half inclined to take it back to the fair, careless charmer, but then remembered that he had read in books that to drop flowers was a manœuvre of the sex. So, drawing from his pocket a greasy note-case, he shoved the flower into it, just in the way he might have thrust a pair of boots into a travelling bag.

Up in the balcony, he heard a sound of stifled laughter, but when the flower was safely stowed away amongst his cards and several old envelopes, and he had the courage to look up, hoping his charmer would reward him with a smile, he found that she had gone. All the way home he walked as nearly upon air as was consistent with his temperament, and for a space forgot the ambition of his life, to make

his office the most perfect in all Spain, and the most competent.

In future, as he walked to his work, he always took the street in which, for the first time in all the current of his life, a girl had given him a rose. Any other man would have found out her name, or have got someone to present him to her family, but he, whether from shyness or from some strange romantic whim, never attempted to go further in his quest, or to declare his love. Sometimes the girl appeared and smiled upon him, sometimes she fixed her eyes on space and seemed unconscious of his passage down the street, or if he were alive. Upon those days he would return with a vague feeling of uneasiness, as if in some way she had been unfaithful to him, and had betrayed his trust. Still, next day found him passing down the street as usual, eager and flushed with expectation, with his heart thumping on his ribs. Months passed, and then a year, and still he walked and gazed up on the balcony, usually empty, and without ever once again receiving even the shadow of a rose, or any recognition except a smile on rare occasions, as he passed by upon his way.

The people in the street all knew him, and

the fat woman in the *estanco* who sold cigars and stamps, would remark to her neighbour who sold small coal, as he stood at the door of his dark den, "There goes the madman of the daughter of Don Paco." To which he used to answer, "Yes, a madman, yes; but the girl sits too much at the window, and paints her face too thickly for an unmarried wench. Why does she paint? you say; ah, why indeed, 'Why does the blind man's wife go well arrayed?' the proverb says," and they both smiled and winked.

The Hidalgo, quite unconscious that he had ever been remarked, still found the only pleasure of his life in his brief passage down the street, and might have gone on to extreme old age without attempting to declare his love, if it was love he really felt, had not an unkind fate cut short his dream, waking him cruelly. One day as he walked to his office gazing upon the ground, but his heart turning towards the window where his *innamorata* generally sat, he stopped and rubbed his eyes. A little crowd was gathered round the door, and an unwonted air of festivity lit up the dingy street through which he had so often passed morning and evening for the last year or so. He asked

with trembling at the *estanco*, foreseeing some misfortune in the air. The stout *estanco*-keeper, in her cotton dress, which left her great, unstable bust quite loose and unconfined, patted her glossy hair, arranged a side curl on her cheek, and looking at him with a smile replied, "This is the day on which Don Paco's daughter marries the captain of the Carabineers . . . her mother has good luck, for she is eight-and-twenty if a day, is getting, like myself, a little like a ham, and, as you know, has sat there in the window, like a canary in a cage, for the last seven years."

The Hidalgo thanked her, and having bought a box of matches that he did not want, walked out and stood upon the pavement to see the bride enter her carriage and drive away into the world. He had not long to wait, for leaning on the arm of a stout captain, with a waxed moustache, a sword by his side, and a thick perspiration on his forehead as he struggled with his gloves, she stepped into the street. For the first time in all his life, the poor Hidalgo found his voice, and launched a "Bless your mother," so loudly that the bride stopped for a moment in surprise. Then turning towards her husband, she

smiled a little, and whispered something in his ear which seemed to tickle him. The carriage door was slammed, and as it moved away a hand in a white glove threw a flower from the wedding bouquet to the Hidalgo, as he stood stupefied. This time he understood, and, stooping, picked it up and pressed it to his lips, and it appeared to him that the white glove fluttered an instant at the window, as the bride drove away.

All day he wandered up and down the streets, and for the first time in his life his colleagues missed him during office hours and thought that he was ill. The night he spent in the Retiro, walking about the alleys, named so grandiloquently, Peru, Nueva Granada, Honduras, Mexico, and Paraguay, and after all the other great vice-royalties lost to the flag of Spain.

An October frost had turned the leaves in the Retiro a light gold, and a thin film of ice spread on the waters of the lake. The equestrian statue of the twelfth Alfonso, high on its pedestal, crowning the yet unfinished monument, had a light covering of hoar-frost on the side turned towards the north, and a chill air from Guadarrama stirred the trees, making

them shiver at the coming of the dawn. Men wrapped in blankets, their mouths well covered up, began to show themselves upon the streets; then carts with a long train of horses or of mules, led by a little donkey, and with a pole tied to the wheels to act as a rough break, jolted and rumbled on the stones. Next came men driving goats, and from the country creaked in bullock-carts, drawn by great brindled oxen such as those that the angel goaded to their work whilst the good husbandman Isidro slumbered at noonday in the shade.

Madrid woke up to talk, as other towns wake up to work, and the streets slowly filled with people, who at first sight were going nowhere, by the longest way that they could find. Daybreak still found him wandering aimlessly. Then when the sun rose fully, red and glorious, he seemed to feel the comfort of his rays, and after having smoked a cigarette pacing along the edge of the great pool, he wrapped his cloak tighter around his shoulders; and, when the gates were opened, left his Gethsemane. After a frugal breakfast at a little café he sat an hour or so, smoking contemplatively, till it was time to go. He

reached his office at his accustomed hour, and taking up his pen, set himself resolutely to work, just as a horse with a wrung shoulder throws itself hard against the collar, so as not to feel the pain.

THE CRAW ROAD*

All roads are said to lead to Rome. This may be so, of course, if a man follows them right round the world. Some, though, lead you to realms in which the materialism of the City of the Seven Hills has not and never had a place.

Upon them no legionary in his *caligulæ* and with his conquering spade upon his back has ever marched. The roads he traversed led straight to some place or another, over the tops of hills, across the rivers, passing morasses, cutting the valleys, and right across the plain, just as the State that paid him made its way to fame regardless of the feelings of the world. My road was traced originally by homing crows. Men saw them fly, and thought that where they came from there must be something worth their while to see. That was before the coming of the legionaries. The world was full

* The name was originally the Cró Road, Cró in Gaelic meaning cattle. It was corrupted into "Craw," in the Lowland speech.

of interest in those days, for fairies played upon the heathery knolls, elves sat upon the toad-stools, and the white Caledonian cattle roamed the woods. The spirit of adventure was at least as strong as now, for anyone who left his home to travel, even a little way, where he had never been before, plunged into the unknown. To-day the difficulty is not, that there is not a sufficiency of roads, but that there are too many Romes. This difficulty did not beset the builders of the road I write about.

Following the flight of crows across the hills, they first of all laid a few faggots in the miry places, secured a coracle or two by streams too deep to cross, and, taking in their hands a club or a stone battle-axe, set out across the hills. Thus the road they traced in times gone by is made on other principles than those in use to-day. Twisting round obstacles and in and out between the moors, skirting the base of hills, and now and then coming back upon itself in places where the first road-makers no doubt sat down to rest, it winds upon its way.

Campseyan chiefs, and then Fingalians, have passed along it in their light deerskin brogues. In places, short cuts, now long disused, still shine amongst the heath, showing stones

polished by the feet of ancient forayers. Into recesses of green hills, now out again and then running along the sides of streams, it winds and penetrates. No road I know, not even that between Mendoza and San Felipe de los Andes across the stony slopes of Uspallata, where in the tempests stones roll along like leaves, is lonelier, more desolate, or looks more hostile to mankind than this wild Scottish Trail.

By rights the road should lead to nowhere in particular, but finish off in some impenetrable morass or in some corrie of the hills. That would indeed be a crows' road, and far more interesting than the majority of roads that lead to places no one has any wish to go to, except the people who are born there and cannot get away.

This is what the Craw Road should really be if it were perfect; but, as it is, it winds about the mist-filled hollows and wild hills, on which feed black-faced sheep, and passes now and then a lone farmhouse, white and four-square, with purple slates, its stack of peats at one end, cheese-stone before the door, its fank for sheep-washing, and with a woman in a short striped petticoat vigorously thumping

the blankets in the burn, and crooning out a song. It leads through realms of heath and grass unchanged, save for a sheep-drain here and there, since the beginning of the world, until it reaches one of the rare, old, Scottish mansion-houses, left from an older age.

Miles from a railway station and jammed against the flank of a steep range of hills, between a melancholy little tarn, in which feed tench, and a thick wood, it stands alone and solitary. The grey peel-tower, with battlements either for defence or else to show its owner was a gentleman, stands sentinel beside a square, grey house, with steep-pitched roof and corbie steps, and with a low front door set in a roll-and-fillet moulding, opening upon the road.

The stone above the door sets forth the year of grace in which the builders rested from their task. The narrow ribbon of grey flags in front is mossed and honeycombed by time. The grass which surges up, close to the avenue, leaving a narrow space in which to turn a carriage, right before the door, has that peculiar sour and scanty look of an old pasture when only grazed by sheep. In the dank fields, which we in Scotland dignify as "parks," the trees are mostly all stag-headed, and the tall

spruces on the weather side hold out bare arms, not dead, but stripped and polished by the blast like ancient ivory. Moss has spread out over the avenue, not like a carpet, but with the look of a disease, and in a corner of the grounds the ribs and trucks of an old cotton mill, built as a speculation a hundred years ago, add to the loneliness, by giving, as it were, an air of having perished in the fight with Time and destiny.

The long, dank mill-lead which once set the machinery astir is silted up, in places fallen in, and though long years have passed since it did anything but breed innumerable frogs, is still an eyesore, Nature having steadfastly refused to take it to herself and veil its ugliness.

Smoke curls unwillingly from the chimneys of the house, to be so soon absorbed in mist it leaves one doubtful whether it is smoke, or but damp floating from the trees. Squirrels and rabbits have come into their own, and look at you as on a trespasser, and from the woods even at midday roe venture forth and play. The heron's cry sounds lively, and the tinkling of the burn hidden beneath the bushes of the shrubbery almost oppressive in the deep solitude. All must look magical in the silence

of the stars, when the moon ghostens in the trees, and owls float noiselessly about or pass the time of night in their long melopy, from hollybush to old Scotch fir, their cries re-echoing from the turrets of the house and sounding on the lake.

Then the tall pine trees, which throng about the little urn bearing the inscription "Hæc loca cum peregrinis pinis exornavit, A.G.S.," and the date 1845, compare their notes about the flight of time, whispering uncannily. Hemlocks and Douglasses must then vie with one another, and the Sequoias vaunt their stature, whilst trembling Deodaras shyly claim the palm of grace from all the fellowship. Long, tapering branches, looking fingerlike and human, must be agitated, waking the birds and squirrels by their movement; and if the raiser of the urn could see the trees he planted so many years ago, now grown majestic in their age, he would indeed plume himself on his Latin and his faith, in having planted them.

Martial and angular, his frosty whiskers curling round his chin, his silver snuff-box in his hand, it is not likely that the planter of the trees ever went out at night to hear them whispering, or watch the moonbeams playing

on their boughs, silent and silvery; but had he done so, standing by his urn, he would have looked as much in keeping with the scene as any one of them.

Time had been impotent to bow or mellow him; so he stood still defiant, like an old ash grown on stony ground that stretches out its boughs to meet the elements. The suns of the Peninsula, in whose wars he passed his youth, the storms of politics and of religious controversy of his middle age, had but intensified his proud, unyielding soul, and made him bitter. Perhaps the one soft corner in his heart was to the trees, now grown so beautiful and so luxuriant (after he was dead), to whom, in sure and certain hope that Nature would perform her unconscious miracle, he raised his little urn. One fain would hope that when at night, released from the presence of mankind, they whisper in the breeze, his memory is cherished, and that these foreign pines, which do indeed adorn the spot on which they grow, say now and then to one another, "Do you remember that day, long ago, when we all lay together on a cart, and the stern, white-haired, eagle-eyed old man who set us in the ground?" Meanwhile they wave and whisper, tall and

beautiful, their branches covering the little burn which I remember in my youth running through a grass slope on which stood some young trees, at varying intervals.

The hand that planted them is long decayed, and the old place sleeps in its corrie with something ghostly hanging over it, even in midday.

Through the rough hills, across the moors, passing the isolated white farmhouses, winds the way that leads to it; and overhead the crows caw hoarsely, and seem to say to one another when a rare traveller passes by, "There goes a man upon our road."

SET FREE

A FINE, persistent rain had filled the streets with mud. It lay so thickly that it seemed as if black snow had fallen, and from the pools which had collected here and there upon its surface the passing carriages were reflected, as by a mirage, distorted in the glare of the electric light. The passers-by all had a look of ghosts in the thick foggy air. Rain trickled from their hats and umbrellas, and mud and water oozed beneath their tread. The thoroughfare was blocked in places with cabs all full of people going off upon their holidays, for it was Christmas week. Bells were heard fitfully, calling the faithful to the churches to prepare to celebrate the birth of Him who died upon the Cross to bring peace to the earth.

The trees which overhang the roadway by the park dropped inky showers upon the tramps sleeping or talking on the seats. The drops splashed on the stones and on the cross-board of the rest for porters' burdens which still survives,

a relic of the past, between the cast-iron lamp-posts with their bright globes of light. Here and there at the corners of the streets that lead down to the artery between the parks stood women dressed fashionably, wearing large hats with ostrich feathers. True that their numbers were diminished, for an orgasm of virtue had recently swept over those who rule, and had decreed Vice should do homage to her twin-sister Virtue, but only on the sly. Still they were there, to show how much has been achieved for women by our faith, in the last thousand years. Policemen stood about upon their beats, stout and well fed, looking with scorn if a taxpayer in a threadbare coat passed by them, and ever ready, after the fashion of the world, to aid the rich, the strong, and those who did not need their help, and spurn the miserable.

During the week the churches had been thronged with worshippers. Some went to pray, others resorted to the fane from custom, and again, some from a vague feeling that religion was a bulwark reared in defence of property in seasons of unrest, though this of course they had not reasoned out, but felt instinctively, just as a man fears danger in the night upon a lonely road. Hymns had been sung

and sermons preached inculcating goodwill, peace, charity and forbearance to the weak. Yet London was as pitiless as ever, and the strong pushed the weak down in the gutter, actually and in the moral sphere. Women were downtrodden, except they happened to be rich, though men talked chivalry whilst not refraining for an instant to take advantage of the power that law and nature placed within their reach. The animal creation seemed to have been devised by God to bring out all that was most base in man. If they were tame and looked to him as man, in theory, looks towards his God, he worked them pitilessly. Their loves, their preferences, their simple joys, attachments to the places where they had first seen the light and frisked beside their mothers in the fields, were all uncared for, even were subjects for derision and for mirth, if they were marked at all. If, on the other hand, they were of those, winged or four-footed, who had never bowed the knee or drooped the wing to man's dominion, their treatment was still worse. They had no rights, except of being killed at proper seasons, which were contrived so artfully that but a bare three months of the whole year was left unstained with blood. Woods in their thickest depths witnessed

their agony. Deep in the corries of the hills, in fields, in rivers, on the land, the sea, and in the bowels of the earth they left their fellows, dumb, stricken, wretched, and died silently, wondering perhaps what crime they had committed in their lives so innocent and pure. No one commiserated them, for they were clearly sent into the world as living targets to improve man's power of shooting, or to be chased and torn to pieces in order to draw out the higher feelings of his self-esteem and give him opportunity to say, as their eyes glazed in death, There is one flesh of man, and yet another of the beasts, all glory to His name.

Through the soft rain the roar of the great city rose, though dulled and deadened, still menacing and terrible, as if the worst of human passions, as always happens in a crowd, had got the upper hand, and were astir to wreak themselves on any object ready to their hand. Machines ran to and fro, noisy and sending forth mephitic fumes, and seeming somehow as if they were the masters, and the pale men who drove them only slaves of the great forces they had brought into their lives. They swerved and skated, bearing their fill of trembling passengers, and making every living thing give them the road on pain of mutilated

limbs or death as horrible as by the car of some great idol in the East. No car of Juggernaut was half so terrible, and as they took their passage through the streets men shrank into the second place and seemed but to exist on sufferance, as tenders of machines.

Still, it was Christmas week, and the glad tidings preached so long ago, so fitted for the quiet ways and pastoral existence of those who heard them first, so strangely incongruous with us of modern times, were still supposed to animate men's minds. The night wore on, and through the sordid rows of stuccoed houses the interminable file of cabs, of carriages and motor omnibuses, still took its course, and trains of market-carts drawn by small puffing engines began to pass along the street. In them, high in the air, lying upon the heaped-up vegetables or seated on the backboard clinging by one arm to the chain, boys slumbered, their heads swaying and wagging to and fro as the carts rumbled on the stones. Then the carts disappeared, and the remaining traffic increased its speed in the half-empty streets, the drivers, anxious to get home, shaving each other's wheels in haste or carelessness. Round coffee-stalls stood groups of people in the flaring light

of naphtha-lamps—soldiers, a man in evening dress, a street-walker or two, and some of those strange, hardly human-looking hags who only seem to rise from the recesses of the night, and with the dawn retreat into some Malebolge of the slums. The time and place had broken down all barriers of caste and they stood laughing at obscenities, primitive and crude, such as have drawn the laughter of mankind from the beginning of the world.

In the great open space between the junction of the parks, where on one side the hospital frowns on the paltry Græco-Cockney sham triumphal arch, just underneath the monolith from which the bronze, Iron Duke looks down upon the statues of the men he qualified as "blackguards" in his life, a little crowd surrounded something lying on the ground. A covered van, battered and shabby, stood, with a broken shaft. Under the wheels the mud was stained with a dark patch already turning black, and the smashed shaft was spotted here and there with blood. A heap of broken harness lay in a pile, and near it on its side a horse with a leg broken by a motor omnibus. His coat was dank with sweat, and his lean sides were raw in places with the har-

ness, that he would wear no more. His neck was galled with the wet collar which was thrown upon the pile of harness, its flannel lining stained with the matter of the sores which scarcely healed before work opened them again. The horse's yellow teeth, which his lips, open in his agony, disclosed, showed that he was old and that his martyrdom was not of yesterday. His breath came painfully and his thin flanks heaved like a wheezy bellows in a smithy, and now and then one of his legs contracted and was drawn up to his belly and then extended slowly till the shoe clanked upon the ground. The broken leg, limp and bedaubed in mud, looked like a sausage badly filled, and the protruding splinter of the bone showed whitely through the skin.

The little crowd stood gazing at him as he lay not without sympathy but dully, as if they too were over-driven in their lives.

Then came a policeman who, after listening to the deposition of the owner of the horse, took out a little book, and having written in it briskly with a stumpy pencil, returned it to his pocket with an air of having done his duty and passed on upon his way.

The electric lamps flared on the scene. In

the deserted park the wind amongst the trees murmured a threnody, and on the road the dying horse lay as a rock sticks up, just in the tideway of a harbour, thin, dirty, overworked, castrated, underfed, familiar from his youth with blows and with ill-treatment, but now about to be set free.

CAISTEAL-NA-SITHAN

It was indeed a castle of the elves. Over all, hung an air of melancholy. From the deserted lodge, behind the high, beech hedge, which shut the place off from the lake, the avenue led through a sea of billowy mounds, on which grew trees as thickly as in the tropics, some dead and some decaying, some broken off by storms and left to die or live just as they chose.

Moss had spread like a carpet over the deeply rutted road.

Here and there by its side stood foreign shrubs, some of them growing rankly, and others which had died years ago, standing up dry and sere, inside their iron cages, as a dead body in a life-belt floats upon the sea. The bracken met the lower branches of the trees and formed a screen, through which rabbits had made their runs, like little railway tunnels.

They fed upon the mossy grass outside, retreating slowly when they were alarmed, conscious they were at home, and that a passer-by was an intruder into their domain. Where the trees fell, they lay and rotted, covered with lichens and with a growth of ferns that sprang from the dead bark.

The neglected woods seemed to have bred a strange and hostile air. Instinctively one looked around, as if some power of nature, which cultivation kills, was still unchecked, had just declared a war upon mankind, and was about to open its attack.

The passing of a roe through the deep underwood, a passage ordinarily so fairy-like and light, there, sounded ominous, and the sharp cracking of a decaying twig under its flying feet, or the soft rustling of its body through the ferns, sent a thrill through the listener, as if some monstrous creature of a dream were going to appear.

Even in summer everything seemed dank, and in the peaty soil the water oozed beneath the footsteps, making the ground seem treacherous and false.

Sometimes at sunset, when a red gleam fell on the top of oaks, turned all the bracken fiery,

and lighted up the overhanging hills which peeped above the tops of the high trees, the air of menace was dispelled and a breath from the outer world brought back security. When the last gleams had vanished, and a cold, chilly air, especially before the autumn frost, crept through the brakes and stirred the frozen tufts of bulrushes in the black, awful-looking ponds, fringed with dark rhododendrons, and set about upon one side with towering spruce firs, a panic seemed to creep into the soul.

The thick, white mists that rose up from the pool hung in the trees, and seemed as if they were alive, so stealthily they crept about the branches, and twined like serpents, twisting and writhing in the air.

Owls floated like gigantic moths across the avenue, or sat and called to one another in the recesses of the woods. All was so silent and so still, you seemed to feel the waves of sound that floated from their call, just as one hears the whirring of an old eight-day clock before it strikes its bell. In the low park beyond the wood, through which the avenue led to the house, the dun or creamy Highland cattle slept on the hillocks, to shun the draughts of night. A chilly damp rose from the old bog-land, long since

reclaimed, but showing black and peaty where moles had made their hills, which dotted the sour grass at intervals, and in the moonlight looked like animals asleep. A great moss ditch cut the low park in two, and in it the black, frozen water seemed like a stream of pitch. Birches and stunted oaks were set about the fields, their old, gnarled roots laid bare by winter rains, and by the stamping of the cattle in the summer, when they stood underneath the trees to shelter from the flies. Through the long, limb-like roots, rabbits had burrowed, and here and there a heavy stone was left, stuck in the crevices, looking like some lost weapon of the Stone Age, or prehistoric club.

Just where the deep moss ditch crossed underneath the road, a high, iron, double gate barred off the avenue.

Beyond it stretched a gloomy road, winding between dark trees. At night, when you rode through it, your horse snorting occasionally when rabbits ran across the path, or birds stirred in the trees, it felt as if you were a thousand miles from help. In front, the dark road wound, as it seemed, interminably, through overhanging trees. Between you and the world was the half-mile or so

of the mysterious woods, and the black, sullen ponds.

At last, passing another gate, it led up to a shrubbery. A mossy burn fed a neglected duck-pond, upon whose waters floated feathers, and round whose sides grew tufts of pampas grass. Tall bushes of wygelia and syringa, dead at the sides but vigorous in the middle, with flowering currants, andromeda and rank-growing thickets of guelder rose and dogwood, concealed the house from view.

The rabbit netting, nailed to the fencing of the park, was broken here and there, and billowed like a sail. Through it the rabbits entered as they pleased, burrowing beneath the bushes, and leaving trails which led up to the lawn. Enormous beeches, and a sycamore or two, growing like cabbages, showed that at one time the neglected policies had been well cared for, and the decayed and mouldering rustic seats, set about here and there, recalled the time when children played upon the lawn, whilst nurses sat and watched them underneath the trees. The house itself, high and steep-roofed, with pepper-boxes at the angles, and a wide flight of steps, upon whose parapet two great iron eagles, that once had been all

painted in the proper colours of the coat of arms of which they formed the crest, was desolate and drear. The rough-cast plaster, which at one time had covered all the walls, had fallen in patches here and there, leaving great blotches that looked like maps, upon its sides.

Right opposite the door, a roundel of rank grass, once closely shaven, but now rank and ill-tended, lay like an island in the road. Two whinstone posts, with eight-shaped irons at their sides, for hitching horses to in times gone by, just raised their heads above the turf.

The house door, left ajar, but yet made fast against the world by a confining chain, with the bolt running in a tube, gave just the touch of human interest required to accentuate the melancholy of the forlorn abode.

As one peeped through into the hall, covered with a well-worn oilcloth, and marked the absence of sticks, hats, umbrellas, and all that goes to give a hall a look of being the introduction to a comfortable home, one felt the owner was a solitary man, who in the summer evenings, when the owls hooted faintly in the recesses of the woods and swallows hawked at

flies across the lawn, sat on the parapet of the tall flight of broken steps, between his iron eagles, and meditated on what might have been, had things gone differently.

Beyond the hall few ever penetrated, for an old woman, holding the door fast in her hand, used to peep out and answer, "The laird is oot," and then when the chance visitor had turned away disconsolate, flatten her nose against a window and watch him stumble down the road. The great, old Scottish stable, built round a courtyard, with the decaying clock upon its tower, one hand long lost, the other pointing eternally to twelve, stood, buried in the trees, whose branches swept the slates, showering them down upon the grass in gales, and dropping ceaselessly in rain, till a green lichen grew just underneath the drip.

Most of the doors had gone, and those that still fought on against the rain and wind were kept in place by pieces of coarse leather, roughly nailed on the jambs. Upon the wooden sheathing of the pump, hay seed had sprouted, growing a rank crop of grass, which in its turn had died, and hung all mildewed and with small drops of moisture oozing from the stems.

Such was the place, one of the last examples of the old Scotland which has sunk below the waves of Time. Perhaps, not an example to be followed, but yet to be observed, remembered, even regretted in the great drabness of prosperity which overspreads the world.

Few people ever trod the avenue, and even tramps but rarely camped in the deserted woods, though fallen trees were plentiful, and none would have been the wiser if they had stayed a week. The owner, an old sailor who had inherited the place in middle life, had by degrees become such a recluse that sometimes weeks would pass without his being seen. Shut off from all the world, he lived with an old housekeeper, as it were in a wilderness, and if by chance he met a stranger on the road would dive behind the bushes to escape, like a wild animal. Now and then far-off relations would come down to shoot, stopping at some hotel, and now and then a neighbour would drive over, always to be received by the old housekeeper with the same formula, "The laird is oot."

Occasionally he left the country and went abroad, but always to some place near the seaside, where he would pass long hours look-

ing at ships, though without making any friends. Lübeck and Kiel, Riga or Genoa, were his favourite haunts, and those who met him at any of those ports used to report having seen him, dressed in his blue serge suit, and with the air of being the one man left in a depopulated world, in the same way that captains jot down in their log, "In such a latitude, in the first dog-watch passed a derelict."

By degrees his visits to far-off ports grew rarer, and at last he seldom passed the gates of his neglected grounds, except occasionally on Sundays, when he attended church, reserved and silent, speaking to none, but yet a little critical, after the fashion of a man who had read prayers on board his ship, and therefore should know something of the way in which a service ought to be carried on.

On these occasions he would stand a little in the churchyard, looking intently at a sort of pen, surrounded by a broken iron railing, in which his ancestors reposed.

Whether his thoughts ran on the unstability of life, or if he only tried to make a calculation of the probable expense he would incur if he embarked upon repairs, was never known to anyone, although some said he thought of

neither, but merely leaned against the rails to pass the time until the congregation had dispersed, and left him free to set off home again.

Everyone speculated on his death, some saying that it would occur some day when he was quite alone, out in the woods, and others that he would be found dead in his chair, with the *Pacific Pilot* open in his hand. Not a bad book for an old sailor to have consulted, when just about to weigh his anchor; but as it happened he had to make his landfall, unassisted and alone.

A bitter frost, intense and black, had bound the district, congealing the dark waters of the lake into a sheet of glass. Trees groaned and cracked, and in the silent woods a shudder seemed to run through the gaunt avenues, as if they suffered from the cold. Crows winged their way, looking like notes of music on an old page of parchment, across the leaden sky.

High in the air there passed strings of wild geese, and in the stillness of the frost their melancholy cry was heard, till they were almost out of sight.

All nature seemed engaged in a stern fight for life, with some calamity which had attacked it unawares. The very streams stood still to

watch the progress of the battle, fast in their bonds of ice.

Somehow or other, after the fashion that in Africa news travels always a day or two ahead of any traveller, it got about the countryside the laird was missing from his home. As, in the little inn, the constable, "the post," one or two farmers, and the innkeeper were talking of the report, the housekeeper was seen hobbling along the road. Coughing and wheezing, she averred she "couldna bide alane, up in yon awfu' house." The laird, it seemed, upon the evening of the commencement of the frost, had gone out, as was usual, just before tea-time, but never had come back. She had waited for two days, setting his meals upon the table at the stated hours, and at night putting out a lantern at the front door to guide him to the house. A day and night had broken down her courage, and given her the strength to find her way alone through the deserted avenue, for, as she said, "If she had passed anither nicht alane wi' all they bogles and they howlets, she would have gone fair gyte."

All search was useless. The woods and moors guarded their secret, and had not chance revealed it, the disappearance of the laird would

have been put down as the last eccentricity of an eccentric life.

Fate was not willing that the laird's last resting-place should not be known, for as some boys were skating on one of the black ponds they saw what they took for bird's feathers, frozen in the ice. When they came home, trembling and pale, they said the feathers turned out to be the hair on a man's head, and that below the ice they had seen something that "lookit like a muckle fish, and frichted them to death."

At once the sparse inhabitants of the wild district proceeded to the place, entering the sacred grounds from which they had been debarred for years. Their lanterns, glimmering like glow-worms over the dark pond, and shedding a fantastic light on the black ice, outlining every branch upon the leafless trees, and playing on the clump of rhododendrons on the bank, gave a strange air of unreality to everything around.

One of the boys pointed out the spot, and as the ice was frozen so intensely, on the clear, windless night, they saw beneath it the laird's body, in the same way that you can see a fish which has been taken by the frost.

When they had cut it out, framed in a square of ice, he was so life-like, laid upon the bank, in the dim, quavering light of the horn lanterns, that those who saw him always used to say, "You'd hae just thocht the laird was sleepin', if he had na been sae gash."

IMMORTALITY

He stopped his oxen, with a prolonged low cry, and standing just in front of them with one hand on the yoke, the other resting on his goad, which he held like a spear, stuck upright in the ground, he said, after due compliments, as people say when they translate an Eastern letter, "I see you are looking at it."

The object that I saw was a strange building, something like a Moorish saint's tomb, but with a burnished copper roof, reflecting back the sun. It stood out, garish and vulgar, just beyond the old, brown walls of a Castilian town, built on the slopes of a gaunt sierra, at whose feet ran one of those deep, greenish rivers only seen in Spain. A mediæval palace of warm, yellow stone, the tower of the collegiate church, the strange and burnt-up country stretching almost to the walls without a suburb intervening, or a stray villa dotted here and there to break the sea of brown, rendered the building still more paltry in its meretriciousness. Lighting a

cigarette slowly and painfully with a flint and steel, the bullock-driver, leaning against the yoke of his great tawny oxen, said: "Yes, what you see there we call the 'mushroom tomb.' A lady built it as you see it now, one of those modernists, who go about in motor-cars, frightening the oxen and killing all our dogs. Now it is finished she does not like it, and, I hear, is going to pull it down, as she has done two others that she built. She goes on building tombs, as if one tomb was not enough to be forgotten by, as other folk build houses. Fools build a house, they say, for other men to live in, and so perhaps the Countess may build her tomb not for herself, for she may die at sea or in some foreign place."

I thanked him, and he, after accepting a cigar, which he proceeded to cut up for cigarettes, cutting it on his hand with a clasp knife a foot in length that opened with a series of clicks, gravely saluted me, stuck his goad into the near ox, in the loose skin upon its neck, and with a drawn-out *Anda-a-a* set out again towards the town. I walked towards the tomb, and saw that it was empty, unfinished, and half-plastered, and that above the door there

was a monstrous coat of arms, just underneath the cross. It stood in a flat waste of gravel, which had been carted from the river, and was already disappearing in the cracked, thirsty ground. Looking more closely, I found what I had thought was copper on the roof, were tiles of orange glass, laid overlapping, like planks in a boat built clinker-wise. Half-finished stones lay here and there, with broken wheelbarrows and bent and rusty picks. The monstrous building stood upon the plain, alone, ridiculous, and yet pathetic in its ugliness, and in the evident intent of her who built it to leave some recollection of herself when she was gone.

Years passed, and I forgot the "mushroom tomb," the old Castilian town with its harsh Moorish name, the sierra, and the river, edged with willows, looking like a thin green ribbon dropped in the dusty plain. Madrid, from the mere village of my youth, with its ill-paved and tortuous streets, set here and there with convents, and broken here and there with rambling palaces roofed with brown tiles, almost by accident became a modern town. Seville went at a bound from a great, silent Moorish city, where no one but a gipsy or a

beggar walked in the streets by day, to a tourist centre, with paltry little shops full of cheap fans and tambourines, on which were set forth views of the Giralda, gipsies with eyes as big as oysters, and heads of bull-fighters. Cheap castagnettes, made of unseasoned wood and warranted to crack the first time they were used, with raw-looking guitars and tinselled-handled knives all made in Birmingham or Lille, but duly lettered with inscriptions such as "Do not draw me without cause or sheathe me without honour," were hawked about the streets by turnpike bull-fighters who never faced a bull. Tramways ran through the narrow Calle de Genova that leads to the Cathedral, and bands of tourists haunted the cafés and the dancing-halls, urging the gipsy dancers to fresh indecencies, unknown to them in unsophisticated days.

Bilbao and Barcelona had become great hives of industry, the latter having developed into a Manchester or Birmingham with great tree-planted streets and a new suburb stretching out towards the hills. The walls had been demolished, and the old quays just underneath them, where once lay the fruit schooners, painted light green or white, with tapering

masts and spars, and with a figurehead of Flora, or Pomona, carved and gilt, had turned to docks, from which great liners took away their droves of emigrants. Places remote as Ronda had blossomed forth in great hotels, with liveried touts standing about their doors, and speaking every language, without the smallest notion of its grammar or its form. In fact, progress had come to the more frequented parts of Spain. People in them no longer spoke of any foreigner as *El Francés*, and prices, which of course keep step with progress, had risen mightily. In fact, an air of skin-deep Europeisation had come upon the land, obscuring almost all the national virtues, in the favoured spots where it prevailed, and bringing out all that was worst in Spanish character.

Business or pleasure, or something of the sort, took me once more to Guadalcázar to find the scene unchanged. When the slow, rumbling train had drawn up at the little station, sweltering in the sun, two or three red and yellow omnibuses, drawn by thin mules or white, apocalyptic horses, harnessed with rope, and having nearly every one an open sore upon some part of him, described by Spanish drivers as a *flor*, waited to rattle one up the

steep, stony road. Whips cracked, bells jingled, and the thin windows rattled with a noise like thunder, whilst the rough, wooden box on wheels bounded and skated on the stones. People, who must have seen it every day for years, turned out to watch it pass, in the same way they thronged the railway station every night to watch the arrival of the train from Barcelona to Madrid. Girls waved their handkerchiefs and men shouted *Adios Pepe* to the driver as if he had been setting out upon a journey of a hundred miles.

At last, battered and sore with the long twenty minutes' struggle not to be thrown against the roof, the instrument of torture stopped with a jerk outside the doorway, where sat the owner of the inn. Nothing proclaimed his status, except an air of great detachment, which seemed to indicate he was a stranger in the town. He sat, with a chair tilted up against the wall, smoking one of those oily, black cigars called *Brevas*, which only Spaniards of his class can smoke and not expire at the last puff. His spotless shirt was open at the neck, and his broad face, close shaved and blue, gave him a look as of a bull-fighter, who had made money and retired. I

was the only passenger, and one might have thought he would have welcomed me; but beyond a grave answer to my salutation, nothing was farther from his mind. He thought there was a room, and was just making up his mind to call to somebody to show me to it, when looking at me he said, "I think I have the honour. Were you not here ten or twelve years ago?"

A ragged boy having taken up my bag to a bare room which seemed never to have been swept since my last visit to the place, I threw the window open, and sitting down looked out upon a grassy, half-deserted square. A feeling as of having been marooned on some lone island crept on me as I watched two horses playing on the grass. No one regarded them as they chased one another up and down. At times a cat stole timidly across a street, just as a tiger steals across a forest glade, as stealthily and with an air as far detached from man. At last even the horses ceased their play and stood hanging their heads under a scanty-foliaged tree. Nothing was stirring in the town, and the hot open space was given over to the crickets, whose shrill chirp sounded so loud that one forgot a silence as of death

hung over everything. Later on, as the breeze coming from the hills recalled the town to life, I strolled out on to the hot road, bordered on each side with heat-dried, ill-grown acacias, and followed it outside the town to where I now remembered that the "mushroom tomb" had stood.

Looking towards the place, I rubbed my eyes, for certainly a building occupied the place, but changed indeed, from the domed cupola, crowned with its yellow glass. Gone were the walls with their raised Moorish tracery; gone were the dazzling tiles, and in their place a Gothic structure with flying buttresses and gimcrack pinnacles stood, white and glittering, a newer and a more foolish mushroom than the last. The gravelly waste still stretched around it, and the same litter of a stone-mason's yard, the picks and shovels, wheelbarrows, and chips of stone, were strewed about the walls. Only the coat of arms, but now grown rather weather-beaten, was let into a niche above the door. The arid plain scorching and sweltering in the sun, the old embattlemented town, the river winding between its poplars, and the giant sierra, towering beyond the walls, gave the fantastic tomb a look as of

a travelling circus, playing in some old, Roman amphitheatre. A shepherd stood immovable and brown, and looking like a trunk of a dead tree, as he leant on his stick, guarding a flock of brown-woolled sheep, who searched amongst the stones for any herbage that had escaped the drought. When they strayed out of bounds he cracked his sling, unwinding it from where he wore it, wrapped above his sash. They, knowing a shower of stones would follow if they disobeyed, put up their heads, then turned and fed towards him as he stood like a land-mark on the plain. Unchanging and unchanged he stood, just as his forefathers must have looked, brown-cloaked and sun-tanned at the reconquest from the Moors.

Nothing but a poor wooden cross would mark his burial-place; a wooden cross, that in a year or two would rot and fall; nothing but a brown post he looked, standing so silently, with all his flock, now feeding quietly around him, and well within the distance of a sling's cast of a stone. His great, brown dog, with its spiked collar round its neck, slept at his feet, changing position when he moved, to keep itself within the shade its master's figure threw upon the ground. The red-roofed town,

wild sierra, and the shepherd with his sling, his *angarina*, knotted quince-tree staff, his gnarled, brown hands, rough hempen sandals, his sheep-skin jacket, and his clear-cut features, shaded by a broad hat, such as was worn in Thessaly when the world was young, and men and gods so near to one another that goddesses came down and left Olympus, finding the love of men more satisfying than the serene embraces of their kind, all formed a picture of that Spain, now so fast passing.

Penelope may build her tomb, as she waits for the coming of her lord, him of the hour-glass and the scythe. Let her build on, the only lasting traces of a man's passage through the world are those that the brown, sling-girt figure that I saw standing in the middle distance, cast upon the sand.

A MEETING

It was, if I remember rightly, for it is more than thirty years ago, in the great stretch of forest between Caraguatá-Guazú and Caballero Punta, that the meeting which I think brought joy, at least for a short time to one of those concerned, took place. For miles the track ran through the woods; the trail worn deep into the red and sandy soil looked like a ribbon, dropped underneath the dark, metallic-foliaged trees.

At times a great fallen log, round which the parasitic vegetation had wrapped itself, turned the path off, just as a rock diverts the current of a stream. In places the road, opened long ago, most likely by the Jesuits, ran almost in the dark, under the intertwining ceibas and urandéys. Again, it came out on a clearing, in which a straw-thatched hut or two, with a scant patch of mandioca, an orange grove, and a thick bunch of plantains, marked a settlement. The fences were all broken, and peccaries had

rooted up the crops. The oranges lay rotting underneath the trees, and as you passed along the solitary trail and came out on the clearings, flocks of green parakeets took wing from where they had been feeding in the deserted fields, and troops of monkeys howled. The four years' war had laid the country waste, and villages were left deserted, or at the best inhabited by women and by girls. In all that long, mosquito-haunted ride, that I remember, just as if I had ridden it a week ago, through the old Jesuit missions, between the Paraná and Paraguay, it was the rarest thing to meet a man, and rarer still to meet a horse. Occasionally you might come upon a family living alone amongst the woods, upon the edge of some old clearing; but if you did, they had no animals about the house but fowls.

At intervals you might chance to cross some wandering Correntino, dressed in the poncho and the bombachas of the Gaucho, journeying towards Asuncion; more rarely a Brazilian on his mule; but all the natives were on foot, most of the horses having been killed in the long war. The legend was that Lopez met his death on the last native Paraguayan horse,

a little roan; but be that as it may, horses were rare to find, and the fierce nature of the Tropics had so reconquered all the cultivated land that there was little grass for them to eat. Fields that had once born mandioca were indistinguishable under a tangle of rank grass, dwarf palms and scrubby plants, whilst maize plantations had remained unsown, bearing but a few straggling plants, grown from the falling ears. Even the pathways through the woods had become impassable, through the thick growth of gnarled and knotty lianas, which, like a web of cordage, barred the way. Tigers abounded, and killed the few remaining horses, if they could catch them sleeping near the woods. Bats and mosquitoes, with enormous ticks, combined with several distempers, which the natives said had only come after the war, and when the country had begun to go back to the primeval forest, rendered a horse's life unbearable, and made him difficult to keep.

Those Paraguayans who had a horse cherished him as the apple of their eye, covering him up at night against the vampire bats, and bathing him at sunrise and at sunset to keep away ticks and mosquitoes and a thousand other crawling and flying plagues.

Even with these precautions there yet remained the fear of snakes and poisonous weeds, so that a man who had a horse became a slave, and passed his time in caring for him and ministering to his welfare and his health. So as I jogged, that is, of course, walked, for the forest trails were far too deeply worn into the soil to jog with safety, I passed long strings of women, dressed in their low-cut sack-like garment, embroidered round the neck with black embroidery. Their hair, cut square across the forehead and hanging down their backs, gave them a mediæval air. All were barefooted, and all smoked thick cigars, which they kept lighted at the torch their leader carried in her hand to scare the jaguars. Upon their heads they carried baskets full of oranges, of mandioca, and of maize. Sometimes they all saluted, sometimes they only smiled and showed their teeth, and sometimes one of them would say, amidst the laughter of the rest, "We all want husbands," and added something else in Guarani that made a laugh run rippling down the line.

Occasionally a crashing in the bushes near the trail told of the passage of a tapir, through the underwood, and once as I came to a little

clearing a tiger lay stretched flat upon a log, watching the fish in some dark backwater, just as a cat lies on the garden wall to watch the birds. Butterflies floated lazily about, scarce moving their broad, velvet wings, reminding one somehow of owls, flitting across a grass ride in a wood, noiseless, but startling by their very quietness.

The snakes, the humming-birds, the alligators basking in the creeks, the whir of insects and the metallic croaking of the frogs, the air of being in the grip of an all-powerful vegetation, reduced a man, travelling alone through the green solitude, to nothingness. One felt as if in all that wealth of vegetation and strange birds and beasts, one's horse were the one living thing that was of the same nature as oneself.

Had Balaam only heard his ass's voice in such a place, it would have sounded comforting to him, and might have cheered him on his way. The heat which poured down from the sun, in the few places where the track was open overhead, met the heat rising from the red, sandy soil and focussed on one's face, drying the blood that the innumerable flies had drawn, into hard, sticky flakes. After interminable

hours of heat, and intervals of dozing from which one woke but just in time to save one's balance and to remember, shuddering, what would occur, if by mischance one fell and let the horse escape, alone, and miles away from any human habitation, the trail led out upon a little clearing in the sea of woods. Smoke curled from a fire under some orange trees, between whose branches hung a cotton hammock, with the fringe sweeping on the ground, as it swung to and fro, impelled by a brown foot.

To my astonishment my horse neighed shrilly, and was answered by a horse, which on first coming to the clearing I had overlooked. As I rode up, repeating as I rode, the formula, "Hail, blessed Virgin," being answered by the man who had been lying in the hammock, "Without sin conceived," I saw the horse was a red roan, fat and in good condition, and branded with the sign of Aries, set rather low upon the hip. The Paraguayan welcomed me, and bringing out two solid, wooden chairs with cowhide seats, tilted them up against the wall of his mud and straw-thatched hut, and we sat down to talk. His clothes were simple, and yet adequate enough con-

sidering the place. Upon his head he wore a home-made hat plaited from fibre of a palm leaf, and round his waist a leather apron, held in its place by two old, silver coins. With the exception of hide sandals on his feet, and a red cloak of baize hung loosely on one shoulder, he was as naked as the day on which he first drew breath upon the earth. For all that, in his bearing he was dignified enough, and after placing a long-barrelled gun which he had snatched up hastily when I approached his house, against the wall, but well within his reach, he sat down and motioning me to the other chair began to talk as a man talks who has been long alone. Where had I come from? and how was it that I was dressed like a Correntino, being as he imagined, a foreigner, perhaps a Spaniard, or some other "nation," that spoke no Guarani?

My horse, he did not know the brand, looked like a horse from the low countries down the river. I had better be careful of him, especially at night, or else the vampire bats would suck his blood. The tigers, too, were specially attracted to a white animal, but then white was such a colour for a gentleman, especially white with a black skin, suitable

too for Paraguay, as a white horse is certain to swim well, and the old boat upon the Tebicuari had never been replaced, and I should have to cross in a canoe.

"Tell me," he said, "what are the 'nations' doing in Asuncion? Is there a government, and who is president? What, General Caballero? Ah, I remember him, a barefoot boy, running about till Lopez took his pretty sister to live with him. Madama Lynch was not well pleased at it . . . but then a president is just like God. What he wants, that he will have, be sure of it." It seemed his wife was dead or lost during the war, and when I pointed to some women, one pounding maize in a tall mortar, another picking oranges, and a third swinging in a white cotton hammock, he said, "Yes, women, as you see. In these times the poor things have got no husbands, and Christians have to do their best, out of pure charity."

Much did we talk about things interesting to men in Paraguay, the price of cattle and the like, the increase of tigers in the land, whether the road was open from Corrientes to Asuncion through the Estero Ñembucú, and if the Indians in the Chaco had been at what he called "their own," now that there was no

law. On all these points I satisfied him as far as I was able, striving to make such news as I had gleaned upon my way, exact, but palatable.

When we had drunk a little *maté*, which after the Paraguayan country fashion was served quite cold, my host said, "By this time your horse's back must have got cool; one of the girls shall take him down to bathe."

As the girl led him past the roan, both neighed, and my host's horse reared and strove to break his rope.

When in a little the girl came back leading my horse all dripping from his bath, the roan with a wild plunge snapped his hide halter, and came galloping to meet my white, and, circling round him, at last stood with his red, wide-open nostrils close against his nose.

The horses seemed to talk, and mine plunged and would certainly have broken loose had not I run to him. My host, who had looked on with interest, told me his horse had been six months without once seeing another of his kind. "Let your horse loose," he said, "to play with him. Neither is shod, and they can do no harm to one another; let him loose, then, to play." Placing some canes and brush-

wood to block the road, he said, "Now they are safe; they cannot get away, and horses never go into the thick woods, and if they did they cannot possibly go far."

Somewhat reluctantly I let my horse run loose, leaving his headstall with a lazo trailing on the ground, knowing a horse in South America, once loose, is never willing to be caught.

The Paraguayan smiled, and as my horse passed by him, caught and undid the lazo, saying, "I answer for him with my head, and in the galloping that they will make, the rope would be a danger to them; besides, your horse will never try to get away."

For hours the horses played, leaping about like lambs, galloping to and fro, now rearing up and now coming down with their legs across each other's shoulders on their backs. At nightfall we caught and tied them close to each other, and after feeding them with maize cut down bundles of green *pindó*, heaping it up before them for the night. When we had had our supper, which, if I remember after thirty years, was a rough stew of rice and charqui, which we ate using our long knives for spoons, we sat against the corner of the

house, swinging our tilted chairs. The women brought us green cigars, and one of them, taking a cracked guitar, some of whose strings were mended up with copper wire and some with bits of hide, sang what is called a *Triste*, as the fireflies flitted through the trees.

"Don Rigoberto," said my host (for my own name was unfamiliar to him, and to pronounce it with more ease he altered it, perhaps for euphony), "look at the animals." I looked, and they had finished eating and stood with their heads resting on each other's shoulders, like the advertisement of Thorley's food for cattle, which I remember in my youth at railway stations. "Two years," he said, "I was in prison in Asuncion, in the time of Lopez, not the one that José Diabo killed at Tacurupitá, but his old father Don Antonio. Days passed, and weeks and years, and all the time I never saw a man, for they let down my food and water by a string. When I got out, the first man that I met was to me as a long-lost brother. . . . I went and kissed him in the street. Therefore, Don Rigoberto, I know what my horse feels alone here in this *roza*, with not a soul of his own kind to say a word to him. This day has been a *fiesta* for him,

and now let us repeat the rosary, and then to bed. . . . To-morrow is another day."

I fear the part I took in the repetition of the simple prayers was fragmentary; but at the break of day, or, to be accurate, about an hour before the dawn, I saddled up and bade my host good-bye. As I rode out into the dewy trail a thick white mist enveloped everything. It blotted out the lonely clearing in the first few yards. It dulled the shrill, high neighings of the roan, who plunged and reared upon his rope. Through the long, silent alleys of the primeval forest they sounded fainter as I rode, until at last they ceased, leaving their sadness still echoing after thirty—or is it five-and-thirty?—years, fixed in my memory.

SAN ANDRÉS

SOMEONE or other has said the dead have a being of their own, as we confess by saying such a one is dead, just as we say he is alive.

The author of the saying seems to have felt the dead had feelings and were not merely essences purified, quite separate and unapproachable by us. Few wish to see, even to think about, their dead "crowned with an aureole." We want them just as they were, just as we knew them, in their life. The rest is vanity, vanity of vanities, and all the creeds are impotent to help. At best they are an anæsthetic, such as curare, which holds the suffering animal paralysed, so that the operator may not feel the pain that it endures or get his hands scratched. So we grieve on, watching the trees turn red and yellow in the fall, blossom again in spring, and be alive with bees in summer, in winter swaying and cracking in the wind.

This is because we never feel the dead have a distinct and real being of their own. In olden times, in Scotland, people thought differently, and it was held that too much grieving for the dead, vexed them and broke their rest.

I remember once, coming long years ago to an outlying settlement in the province of Buenos Aires, where all the people came, I think, from Inverness-shire; but, anyhow, once on a time they had been Scotch. Their names were Highland, but were pronounced by those who bore them after the Spanish way, as Camerón, and McIntyré, McLéán, Fergusón, and others, which they had altered in the current of their speech, so as to be unrecognisable except to those who spoke the language and knew the names under their proper forms.

None of these Scoto-Argentines spoke English, although some knew a few words of Gaelic, which I imagine they pronounced as badly as their names.

Four generations—for most of them had left their glens after Culloden—had wrought strange changes in the type. They all were dark, tall, sinewy men, riders before the Lord, and celebrated in the district where they lived as being *muy gaucho*—that is, adroit with bolas and

lasso, just as the Arabs say a man, is a right Arab, when they commend his skill in horsemanship. Having left Scotland after the Forty-Five, most of their forebears had been Catholics, and their descendants naturally belonged to the same faith, though as there was no church in all their settlement I fancy most of them believed rather in meat cooked in the hide and a good glass either of Caña or Carlón, than dogmas of their creed.

Horses stood nodding in the sun before the door of every house.

Packs of gaunt, yellow dogs slumbered, with one eye open, in the shade.

The bones of the last cow killed lay in the little plaza of the settlement, and bullock-carts, with cumbrous, high wheels and thatched like cottages, were left as islands here and there in the great sea of grass that surged up to the houses, without a garden or a cultivated field to break its billowing.

Two little stores, in which were piled up hides and sacks of wood, supplied the place with the few outside luxuries the people used, as sardines, black cigarettes, figs, raisins, bags of hard biscuits, sugar, red wine from Catalonia, and Caña from Brazil.

Climate had proved a stronger force than race, and for the most part the descendants of the Gael were almost indistinguishable in looks from all the other dwellers on the plains. They themselves did not think so, and talked about their neighbours with a fine scorn as "natives," and were paid back in kind by them with the nickname of "*Protestantes*," a most unjust reproach to the descendants of the men who lost their all for their old kings and faith.

Protestants they certainly were not, nor for that matter very Catholic, for, as a general rule, people who dwell on plains, far from the world, have less religion than those who live in hills. Still, in the settlement of San Andrés—for the first settlers had called it after the patron saint of their old home—some of their racial traits still lingered fitfully. Born in a country where neither sweet religion nor her twin sister superstition ever had much influence upon the people (who ever saw a Gaucho either religious or the least superstitious?), in San Andrés a belief in fairies and the second sight still lingered in men's minds, with many a superstition more consonant with mountains and with mists, than the keen atmosphere and the material life of the wild southern plains.

Unlike the Gauchos and the Arabs, who bury, as it seems, in the most open place that they can find, leaving the dead, as it were, always with the living, as if they thought the pressure of a passing foot somehow brought consolation to those lying beneath the ground, these Protestants railed off their little cemetery with a high fence of ñandubay. The untrimmed posts stuck up knotty and gnarled just as they do in a corral, but all the graves had head- and foot-stones, mostly of hard and undecaying wood, giving an air as of a graveyard in Lochaber by some deserted strath.

There, "Anastasio McIntyré, killed by the Indians," rested in peace. "May God have mercy on him."

A little further on, "Cruz Camerón, assassinated by his friends," expected glory through the intermediation of the saints. "Passers-by, pray for him."

Amparo, widow of Rodrigo Chisholm, lost at sea, had reared a monument in stone, brought from the capital, on which was cut a schooner foundering, with a man praying on the poop. Her pious faith in his salvation and a due sense of local colour showed themselves in a few lines of verse in which the poet, whilst

deploring the sad fate of Roderick, cut off so far away from wife and family, was confident that heaven was just as close at sea as on *la tierra firme*, and that the Lord High Admiral Christ watched over seafarers.

Such was the village, or, as the Gauchos used to say, the *pago*, for, for a league or two on every side, these Scoto-Argentines were the chief settlers upon the land. Indians occasionally harried their flocks and herds, and burned outlying ranches, but nowhere found stouter resistance than from the dwellers in San Andrés, so that, as a general rule, they used to leave the settlement alone.

The patriarchal manners which their forefathers had brought from the Highlands, joined to the curious old-fashioned customs common in those days in Buenos Aires, had formed a race apart, in which Latin materialism strove with the Celtic fervour, and neither gained the day.

A grave sententiousness marked all the older men, whose speech was an amalgam of strange proverbs, drawn from their daily lives. They used to pass their evenings playing the guitar and improvising couplets, whilst the square bottle of trade gin went round, each sipping

from the same glass and passing it along. "Never go to a house to ask for a fresh horse when you see that the dogs are thin," one tall, red-bearded man would say, to which his fellow answered, "Arms are necessary, but no one can tell when." "A scabby calf lives all the winter and dies when spring comes in," and "When a poor man has a spree something is sure to turn out wrong with him," were specimens of their wit and humour, not much inferior after all, to those recorded of much greater men than them, in serious histories.

Sheep-shearings and cattle-markings were their festivities, and now and then, on their best horses, loaded down with plate, they tilted at the ring. The grassy pampa, stretching like the sea on every side of them, but broken as with islands here and there by white *estancia* houses set in their ring of peach groves, limited their horizon, just as a sailor's view is limited on board a ship, to a scant league or two.

In that horizon all of them were born, and most of them had never passed outside of it, except some few who upon rare occasions had gone to Buenos Aires with a troop of cattle, and had returned to talk about its wonders for the remainder of their lives.

Still, none of them were boors, but had the natural good manners both of the Gaucho and the Highlander. The forms of courtesy were long and ceremonious, and when friends met upon the plain, reining their horses in to show how sharply they were bitted, they used to ask minutely after each other's health and of the state in which each member of the family found himself, and then, with an inquiry after a strayed colt, touching their stiff-brimmed hats with a brown, weather-beaten finger, just slack their reins a little, and separate, each going at a slow canter through the grass, the wind blowing their ponchos out like sails, and making their long hair wave about like a great bunch of water-weeds moved by the current of a stream.

This was the settlement which no doubt long ago has turned into a town, with modern improvements, electric lights and drains, beggars and churches; and the few settlers of the older type most probably have all retired into the wilder districts or become millionaires by the increasing value of their lands.

There, though, the older spirit ruled, and the men who spoke Gaelic, or even those whose fathers once had spoken what they called *el*

Gaelico, were looked upon as the interpreters of the spirit of the race. Of these Don Alejandro Chisholm was the chief.

Tall and grey-bearded, he had that look of shagginess which marks the Highlander. Though he knew but a few words himself, his father used to croon old Gaelic songs, and all his childhood had been passed listening to the traditions which his people treasured in their minds. Somehow they looked upon them as their chief distinction, and seemed to feel by their possession that they were in some way or another superior to the rest of those with whom they lived, the men who passed their lives caring for nothing but the present, whilst they lived in the past.

Don Alejandro used to say: "A native has very little soul. When a friend dies he never thinks of him again, and still less sees him. We, on the other hand, have glimpses now and then of those who leave us, but whose spirits hover about the places that they love."

His daughter, Saturnina, a tall, dark girl, willowy and slight, had married Anacleto, her first cousin, and thus, as her father, with true Highland pride in lineage, used to observe, had never changed her name. Her husband, Ana-

cleto, was an amalgam of the Scot and Argentine. Speaking no word of English or of Gaelic, he yet esteemed himself as half a foreigner, although he was a Gaucho to the core. He and his wife were married in a church, a circumstance which marked them out, and people speaking of them used to say they were the couple "married in Latin," which gave them much consideration and a sort of rank. Whether because of the unusual sanctity that blessed their union, from accident or natural causes, their marriage was so happy that throughout the settlement people spoke of a happy couple as being as well mated as *el matrimonio Chisholm*, and looked on them with pride, as being somehow on a different plane from those who perhaps were married by some ambulatory priest, after their children had been born.

They had no children, and perhaps on that account were more attached to one another than are those couples whose love is, as it were, dispersed, having more objects on which to spend itself.

There seemed to grow between them that curious identity of mind which comes to all women and all men who have lived long

together, but in their case was so much marked that they divined beforehand each other's thoughts, and acted on them almost without words. On the long journeys which the husband took with cattle, his wife used to declare she always knew all he was thinking of, and he, on his return, either to please her, or because she really had guessed right, always confirmed her words. The idea of death sometimes must have presented itself before their minds, but, like most happy people, probably only as a calamity, which might befall humanity in general, but could not touch themselves.

Don Alejandro, who in his long life had seen misfortunes, and was the last of all his race except his daughter, used to look sadly on them, and shaking his grey head, say with a sigh: "God grant I may not live to see the death of either of them. The children, though it is a bad comparison, Lord pardon me for likening Christians to brute beasts, remind me of two horses that I had that followed one another. One broke its neck out ostrich-hunting, and the other never seemed right, and pined in misery after its friend had died."

The inevitable came, when Anacleto was

away, far on the southern frontier, out on the boleada, beyond the Napostá.

Never before had he been so long separated from his wife. Three months had passed, and now, as he drew close to San Andrés, riding a tired horse, brown, dirty, and with the oppression that the north wind often brings in Buenos Aires weighing upon his mind, the well-known objects seemed to rise out of the plain, just as an island seems to rise out of the sea, although the men on board the ship know it is there, and have been laying off their course to make it, since the beginning of their voyage. He saw the peach montés which he had known from childhood circling his neighbours' farms. He crossed the sluggish, muddy stream, bordered with dark green sarandis, hitting the pass with the unerring accuracy of the man born upon the plains. Feeling his horse's mouth, he touched him with the spur, and struck into a lope. Passing the little inequalities of ground, the swells and billows which the dwellers on the pampa know as lomas or cuchillas, and recollect as well as Scotchmen recollect their hills, though they are almost imperceptible to strangers, he saw the well-remembered old ombú tree of the settlement.

Eyes just as keen as were his own had seen him too, and to his great surprise a horseman galloped out to meet him, and as he came a little nearer he recognised the well-known piebald that Don Alejandro cherished as the apple of his eye. Sitting upright in the saddle, and swaying lightly, as if he had been five-and-twenty, to every movement of his horse, Don Alejandro rapidly drew near. Just about twenty yards from where his son-in-law was labouring along on his tired horse he checked the piebald, and stopped as if turned instantly to stone. "Welcome, my son," he said. "Your horse looks tired, but he will take you home quite soon enough."

The words froze upon Anacleto's lips when he looked at the old man's countenance and saw how white and drawn he had become.

"Tell me at once!" he cried; "I see the tidings in your face of evil augury."

When they had drawn a little nearer Don Alejandro grasped his hand, and after looking at the horse his son-in-law bestrode, pointed towards the little cemetery, and said: "Let us go there, my son. . . . If we go slowly your horse can carry you."

Dismounting at the gate, they tied their

horses to a post, and entering, the old man led the traveller up to a little mound.

"Underneath this our treasure lies," he murmured gravely, and with the air of one who has got done with tears after long weeks of grief.

They stood and gazed, holding each other's hands, until Don Alejandro said: "Weep, son, for God has given tears for the soul's health. . . . Laughter and tears are the two things that lift us higher than the beasts."

His son-in-law threw himself on the grave, driving his fingers into the black soil, and lay there, tired, dirty, and unkempt, like a great wounded bird.

At last he felt a hand upon his shoulder, and heard a voice, which seemed to come from a great distance, saying: "Come, let us go now, and let our horses loose. In half an hour it will be night."

When they had reached their home they both unsaddled. The piebald, with a neigh, bounded away into the night, but Anacleto's horse stood for a moment, and then lay down and rolled, and rising, shook the dust out of his coat, just as a water-dog shakes himself after a long swim.

"He will do well," Don Alejandro said. "When a horse rolls like that after a journey it is a sign that he is strong.

Over the *maté*, seated round the fire, on the low, solid, wooden benches men used to use out on the pampa, the wanderer heard of how his wife had died.

Next day he passed seated upon her grave, silent and stupefied with grief.

Then for a day or two he lounged about, going down to the cemetery at intervals and looking through the posts, like some wild animal.

Weeks passed, and he still roamed about, speaking to no one, but riding off across the plains, returning always just at sundown, to tie his horse up close to the cemetery gate and stand with his head pressed against the bars looking towards the grave. At last Don Alejandro, fearing that he was going mad, as they sat at the end of a hot day, began to speak to him, saying: "It is not well to grieve too long. It is, as we may say, a selfishness. My father, who knew the older generation, those who lost everything for their religion and their king, had listened in his youth to all the lore that they brought with them from

that far region where, as they say, the mist blurs everything, My father spoke 'Gaelico'" —he said the word almost with reverence— "and those who spoke it always were versed in the traditions of our race. He used to tell me that to grieve for the dead beyond due measure disturbed them in their graves, and brought their spirits weeping back again. So I have dried my tears." As he said this he drew his hand across his eyes, and, looking at it, saw that it was dry.

"Grieve no more, Anacleto. We cannot call her back to us alive. To pain the spirit by our selfishness, that would be cowardly."

They sat till it was almost sunset, and then Don Alejandro went down to the corral to see the animals shut in, just in the way that he had gone each evening, for the last forty years.

The sun set in a glare, the hot, north wind blowing as from a furnace, making the cattle droop their heads, and bringing troops of horses, with a noise like thunder, down to the water-holes.

The teru-teros, flying low, like gulls upon the sea, almost unseen in the fast-coming darkness, called uncannily. The tame chajá screamed harshly behind the cattle-pens.

A boy, riding upon a sheepskin, drove the tame horses into the corral.

The sheep were folded, and in the dark leaves of the old ombú beside the door, the fireflies glistened, and from the pampa rose the acrid smell that the first freshness of the evening draws from the heated ground. Coming out of the rancho Anacleto looked across the plain.

His eyes were full of tears, but with a gulp he choked them, and muttering to himself, "No, it would be cowardly to break her rest, Don Alejandro says so; he had it from his father, who spoke Gaelico," he slowly lit a cigarette, and in the last rays of the light, watched the smoke curl up in the air, blue and impalpable.

A BRAW DAY

NEVER before, in the long years that he had passed in the old place, had it appeared so much a part of his whole being, as on the day on which he signed the deed of sale.

Times had been bad for years, and a great load of debt had made the fight a foregone ending from the first. Still he felt like a murderer, as judges well may feel when they pronounce death sentences. Perhaps they feel it more than the prisoner, for things we do through fate, and by the virtue of the circumstances that hedge our lives about with chains, often affect us more than actions which we perform impelled by no one but ourselves.

The long, white Georgian house, with its two flanking wings, set in its wide expanse of gravel, which, like a sea, flowed to a grassy, rising slope, looked dignified and sad. An air, as of belonging to a family of fallen fortunes, hung about the place. The long, dark avenue of beeches, underneath one of which stood

the gallows stone, looked as if no one ever used it, and on its sides the grassy edges had long ago all turned to moss, a moss so thick and velvety, you might have swept it with a broom.

The beech mast crackled underneath your feet as you passed up the natural cathedral aisle, and on the tops of the old trees the wind played dirges in the cold autumn nights, and murmured softly in the glad season "when that shaws are green."

The formal terraces were roughly mown and honeycombed by rabbits, the whinstone steps were grown with moss, and here and there were forced apart by a strong growing fern that pushed out to the light.

The seats about the garden were all blistered with the sun and rain, and the old-fashioned coach-roofed greenhouse looked like a refrigerator, with its panes frosted by the damp. Under the arch, which led into the stable yard, stood two dilapidated dog kennels, disused, but with some links of rusty chain still hanging to them, as if they waited for the return of shadowy dogs, dead years ago.

The cedars on the slope below the terraces stretched out their long and human-looking

branches, as they were fingers seeking to restrain and hold those whom they knew and loved.

All was serene and beautiful, with the enthralling beauty of decay. The fences were unmended, and slagging wires in places had been dragged by cattle into the middle of the fields; most of the gates were off their hinges, and weeds had covered up the gravel of the walks.

Nettles grew rankly in the grass, and clumps of dock with woody stems and feathery heads, stood up like bulrushes about the edges of a pond. Even at noonday, a light mist still clung about the lower fields below the house, marking out clearly where old "peat hags" had been reclaimed.

Such was the place at noonday; melancholy as regards the lack of care that want of means had brought about; but bright and sunny as it lay facing to the south, sheltered by groups of secular sycamores and beech.

At night a feeling as if one had been marooned upon some island, far away from men, grew on the inmates of the house.

Owls fabulated from the tree-tops, their long, quavering call seeming to jar the air and make it quiver, so still was everything.

The roes' metallic belling sounded below the windows, and the sharp chirping of the rabbits never ceased during summer nights, as they played in the grass.

When the long shadows, in the moonlight, crept across the lawn, it seemed as if they beckoned to the shadows of the dead, in the old eerie house. Those who had gone before had set their seal so firmly upon everything, planting the trees, and adding here a wing and there a staircase, that those who now possessed the house, dwelt in it, as it were, by the permission of the dead.

One day remained to him whose ancestors had built the house; who had lived in the old ruined castle, in the grounds, and who had fought and plundered, rugged and reived after the fashion of their kind. All had been done that falls to a man's lot to do at such a time. The house stood gaunt and empty. By degrees, the familiar objects that time and sentiment make almost sacred and as if portions of ourselves, had been packed up, and on the walls, the pictures taken down, had left blank spaces that recalled each one, as perfectly as if it had been there.

Steps sounded hollow, in the emptiness and

desolation on the stairs, and bits of straw and marks of hobnailed boots showed where the workmen had been busy at their task.

Here and there marks of paint and varnish on a door, showed where a heavy piece of furniture had touched in passing, as sometimes after a funeral you see the dent made by the coffin in the plaster of the passage, as it was carried to the hearse.

A desolating smell of straw was everywhere. It permeated everything, even to the food, which an old servant cooked in the great, ungarnished kitchen, just as a tramp might cook his victuals at the corner of a road.

The polished staircase, which from their childhood had been a kind of fetish to the children of the house, shielded from vulgar footsteps by a thick drugget and a protecting strip of holland, but bleached a snowy white, was now all scratched and dirtied, as if it were no better than the steps which led to the back-yard.

The owner and his wife, after their years of struggle, had felt at first as if their ship had got into a port ; and then as days went by, and by degrees the house which they had cared for more than their own lives, grew empty and

more empty, till it was left a shell, now found their port had vanished, and they were left without an anchorage.

Still, there was one more day to pass. What then to do with it? The house was empty, the few old servants that remained, tearful and wandering to and fro, pleased to be idle and yet not knowing what to do with unaccustomed leisure, jostled each other on the stairs.

The horses had been sold, all but one little old, black pony; the dogs all sent away to friends.

Standing at the hall door, looking out on the sweep of gravel all cut up by carts, the owners stood a little while, dazed and not able to take in that twenty years had flown. It seemed but yesterday that they had driven up to the same door, young, full of expectation and of hope.

Now they were middle-aged and grey. The fight had gone against them; but still they had the recollection of the struggle, for all except the baser sort of men fight not to win, but simply for the fight.

Some call it duty, but the fight's the thing, for those who strive to win, become self-impressed, and that way lies the road to com-

monplace. Verily, they have their reward; but the reward soon overwhelms them, whilst the true fighters still fight on, with sinews unrelaxed.

At last, after having looked about in vain for sticks, but without finding one, for they had all been packed or given away as keepsakes, they walked out to the sundial in the great gravel sweep before the door. Though they had sat and smoked upon its steps a thousand times, watching the squirrels play at noon, the bats flit past at sundown, it yet seemed new to them, and strange. With interest they saw that it was half-past three in China, eight in the evening in New Orleans, and midnight at La Paz.

Somehow it seemed that they had never seen all this before, and that in future, time would be all the same the whole world over, or at least that it would not be marked by little brazen gnomons on a weather-beaten slab of slate. The garden, with the gardeners gone, and the gate open, seemed as strange as all the rest, The flowers that they had planted, and forgotten they had planted, in the course of time had come to be considered in the same way as the old castle just outside the garden

walls, as things that had existed from the beginning of the world.

Weeds choked the gravel in the lower walk, bounded by a long hedge of laurel cut into castles at due intervals. They both agreed next week they should be hoed, and then stopped, smiled and looked away, fearing to meet each other's eyes. The sun beats on the old stone wall, ripening the magnum bonum plums, for it was in September, and both thought, they will be ripe in a few days, but feared to tell each other what they thought.

The tangled, terraced beds, where once had stood old vineries, all had been planted with herbaceous plants, which, from the want of care, had grown into a jungle; but a jungle unutterably beautiful, in which the taller plants, the coreopsis, bocconias, Japanese anemones, and larkspurs stood up starkly, as palm trees rear themselves out of a wilderness of dwarf palmettoes, and of grass.

Over the garden gate, marauding ivy had run across the stone on which the arms of the decaying family were cut in hard grey whinstone, with the date 1686 in high relief, flanked by a monogram.

Upon a bench, from which the view stretched

over the great moss that marked the limits of an ancient sea, and out of which a wooded hill rose like an island, the only thing that broke the level plain between the garden and the distant hills, they sat and let the sun beat on them, for the last time, as it had often done during their years of struggle and of fight.

Descending through a gate, which slagged a little on its hinges, and grated on the stone lintel as it opened after a heavy push, they passed into the narrow strip of extra garden, taken in as it were by afterthought, in the old Scottish fashion, which never seemed to have enough of garden laid about a house. They bade good-bye to the long line of *arbor vitæ* clipped into cones which cast their shadows on the path, so clearly that you were half inclined to lift your feet in passing, they looked so firm and round.

The curious moondial, with its niches coloured blue and red; the burial-ground hidden away amongst the trees, and with a long, grass walk, mossy and damp, leading up to its old grey walls, they visited but did not see, as they were so familiar, that they had become impossible to look at, but as parts and parcels of themselves.

The day seemed never-ending, and in the afternoon, to pass the time, seeing a water conduit underneath a road choked up with leaves, the departing owner of the place set about working hard to clear it, and having done so, congratulated himself on a good piece of work. To bid good-bye to buildings and familiar scenes seemed natural, as life is but a long farewell; but to look for the last time on the trees—trees that his ancestors had planted, and by which he himself recognised the seasons, as for example by the turning yellow of the horse-chestnuts, which he saw from his bed-room windows, or the first pinkish blush upon the broken larch, whose broken top was cased in lead—that seemed a treason to them, for they had always been so faithful, putting out their leaves in spring, standing out stark and rigid in the winter and murmuring in the breeze.

The whispering amongst their branches and the melodious tinkle of a little burn that crossed the avenue, were sounds which, on that last day, pervaded all the air and filled the soul with that deep-seated feeling of amazement that looks out, hopeless and heartrending, from the eyes of dying animals.

The interminable day came to an end at last. The sun set, red and beautiful, over the low, flat moss, and disappeared behind the hills. The owls called shrilly from the trees, and the accustomed air of ghostliness, intensified a thousandfold by solitude, pervaded all the house.

The mysterious footstep which in the course of years had grown familiar, even in winter nights, as it passed up the corridor and stopped with a loud knock on the end bedroom door, again grew terrifying as it had been on the first night that they had heard it years ago.

From out the spaces where the pictures once had hung, the well-known faces seemed to peer, but unfamiliar-looking, with an air as of reproach.

The smallest footfall sounded as loud as if it were the trampling of a horse; and candles, stuck in bottles here and there, gave a dim, flickering light, casting dark shadows on the floor.

Long did the owners gaze into the night, watching the stars come out in their familiar places. The Bear hung right across the cedars, almost due north, Alphecca close to the horizon,

the Square of Pegasus quite horizontal, and Fomalhaut in the south-west, athwart the corner of the Easter Hill.

A light, white frost turned all to silver, and the lake in the east middle distance lay like a sheet of burnished silver under the moon, its islands mirrored dimly and as if floating in the air. No leaf was stirring, and as they sat around a fire of logs, talking of were-wolves, fairies, and superstitions of another land, with their old Spanish friend and servant, the night wore on so rapidly that it was daylight almost as it appeared, before the sun went down.

Short preparations serve for those about to go, and when a few old servants and retainers took their leave, and a black pony slowly took their trunks down to the station, looking forlorn in the immensity of the beech avenue, they closed the door upon their house.

Quickly the trees rushed past, the pond with its tall island looking like a ship, the giant silver firs, the castle, which they beheld as in a dream, all floated by. Just at the cross-roads which led into the park, beside the gate, a man stood waiting for them.

He carried in his hand a hedgebill, and stood

there waiting, as he had waited for the past twenty years, for orders for the day.

Now, he held out his hand, opened his mouth, but said nothing, and then, looking up with the air of one well learned in weather lore, said, "Laird, it looks like a braw day."

AURORA LA CUJIÑI

Isbilieh, as the Moors called Seville, had never looked more Moorish than on that day in spring. The scent of azahar hung in the air; from patio and from balcony floated the perfume of albahaca and almoraduz, plants brought to Seville by the Moors from Nabothea and from Irak-el-Hind. The city of the royal line of the Beni-Abbad was as if filled with a reminiscence of its past of sensuality and blood. The mountains of the Axarafe loomed in a violet haze, and seemed so near, you felt that you could touch them with your hand. The far-off sierras above Ronda looked jagged, and as if fortified to serve as ramparts against the invasion of the African from his corresponding sierra in the country of the Angera, across the narrow straits. Over the Giralda came the faint, pink tinge which evening imparts, in Seville, to all the still remaining Moorish work, making the finest specimen of the architecture of the Moors in Spain look as delicate and new

as when the builder, he who built at Marákesh and Rabat, two other towers of similar design, raised it in honour of the one God, and the great camel driver who stands beside his throne. Down the great river for which the Christians never found a better name than that left by the Moorish dogs, the yellow tide ran lazily, swaying alike the feluccas with their tall, tapering yards, the white Norwegian fruit schooners, and the sea coffins from the port of London, tramps out of Glasgow, and the steam colliers from the Hartlepools or Newcastle-on-Tyne. The great cathedral in which lies Ferdinand Columbus, the most southern Gothic building in all Europe, built on the site of the chief mosque said to have been as large as that of Cordoba, rose from the Court of Oranges, silent as a vast tomb, and seemed protected from the town by its raised walk, fenced in with marble pillars and massive iron chains. The Alcázar, and The Tower of Gold, the churches, especially St. John's beside the Palm, seemed to regret their builders, as, I think, do all the Saracenic buildings throughout Spain. Though ignorant of all the plastic arts, taking their architecture chiefly from the two forms of tent and palm tree, their literature so conceived as to be

almost incomprehensible to the peoples of the north, the tribes who came from the Hedjaz, the Yemen, and beyond Hadramut have left their imprint on whatever land they passed. They comprehended that life is first, the chiefest business which man has to do, and so subordinated to it all the rest. Their eyes, their feet, their verse, and their materialistic view of everything have proved indelible wherever they have camped. They and their horses have stamped themselves for ever on the world. Even to-day, their speech remains embedded, like a mosaic, in the vocabulary of Southern Spain, giving the language strength.

Notable things have passed in Seville since Ojeda, before he sailed for the new-found Indies, ran along the beam fixed at a giddy height in the Giralda and threw a tennis-ball over the weather-vane to show the Catholic kings and the assembled crowd the firmness of his head. Since San Fernando drove out the royal house of the Beni-Abbad, and Motamid, the poet king, took sanctuary in Mequinéz, as Abd-el-Wahed notes in his veracious history of the times, much has occurred and has been chronicled in blood. In the Alcázar, Pedro el Justiciero loved Maria de Padilla; in it he had

made the fish-pond where the degenerate Charles the Second sat a-fishing, whilst his empire slipped out of his hands. The Caloró from Hind, Multán, or from whatever Trans-Caucasian or Cis-Himalayan province they set out from, ages ago, had come, and spreading over Spain, fixed themselves firmly in the part of Seville called the Triana, after the Emperor Trajan who was born there as some say, and where to-day they chatter Romany, traffic in horses, tell fortunes, and behave as if the world were a great oyster which they could open with their tongues, so wheedling and well hung.

So, on the evening of which I write, a Sunday in the month of May, the bull-fight was just over, leaving behind it that mixed air of sensuousness and blood which seems to hover over Seville after each show of bulls, as it may once have hovered, after a show of gladiators, about Italica in the old Roman days.

The fight was done, and all the tourists, after condemning Spanish barbarism, had taken boxes to a man, and come away delighted with the picturesqueness of the show.

Trumpets had sounded, and the horses, all of which had done more service to mankind

than any fifty men, and each of whom had as much right, by every law of logic and anatomy, to have a soul, if souls exist, as had the wisest of philosophers, had suffered martyrdom. Hungry and ragged, they had trodden on their entrails, received their wounds without a groan, without a tear, without a murmur, faithful to the end ; had borne their riders out of danger, fallen upon the bloody sand at last with quivering tails, and, biting their poor, parched and bleeding tongues, had died just as the martyrs died at Lyons or in Rome, as dumb and brave as they.

In the arena the light-limbed men, snake-like and glittering in their tinselly clothes, had capered nimbly before the bull, placing their banderillas deftly on his neck.

Waiting until he almost touched them, they placed one foot upon his forehead, and stepping lightly across the horns, had executed what is called *el salto de trascuerno.* Then leaping with a pole, they had alighted on the other side of him like thistledown, had dived behind the screen, had caught and held the furious beast an instant by the tail, and after having played a thousand antics, running the gamut, known to the intelligent as *volapie*, *galleo*, *tijerilla*,

veronica, and *chatré*, escaped as usual with their lives.

The *espada* had come forward, mumbled his *boniment* in Andaluz, swung his montera round his shoulder towards the presidential throne, and after sticking his sword, first in the muscles of the neck, from which it sprang into the air, and fell, bloody and twisted, on the sand, taking another from an attendant sprite, butchered his bull at last, mid thunders of applause.

Blood on the sand; the sun reflected back like flame from the white walls; upon the women's faces cascarilla: a fluttering of red and yellow fans; lace veils on glossy hair, looking like new-fallen snow on a black horse's back, all made a picture of the meeting of the east and west to which the water-sellers' voices added, as they called *Agua*, in a voice so guttural, it sounded like the screaming of a jay.

A scent of blood and sweat rose from the plaza, and acted like an aphrodisiac on the crowd.

Bold-looking women squeezed each other's hands, and looked ambiguously at one another, as if they were half men. Youths with their hair cut low upon their foreheads, loose, swinging hips, and eyes that met the glance as if

they were half girls, pressed one against the other on the seats. Blood, harlotry, sun, gay colours, flowers, and waving palm trees, women with roses stuck behind their ears, mules covered up in harness of red worsted, cigar girls, gipsies, tourists, soldiers, and the little villainous-looking urchins, who, though born old, do duty in the south, as children, formed a kaleidoscope. The plaza vomited out the crowd, just as the Roman amphitheatre through its *vomitorium* expelled its crowd of blood-delighting Roman citizens, *Civis Romanus sum*, and all the rest of it.

The stiff, dead horses, all were piled into a cart, their legs sticking out, pathetic and grotesque, between the bars. A cart of sand was emptied on the blood, which lay in blackening pools here and there in the plaza, and then the *espada*, smoking a cigar, emerged like Agag, delicately, and drove off, the focus of all eyes. Girls swarmed in the streets, sailing along with their incomparable walk unrivalled in the world, and in the Calle de la Passion the women of the life, stood against open, but barred windows, painted and powdered, and with an eye to business as they scanned passing men.

Lovers stood talking from the streets by signs to girls upon the balcony, their mother's presence hidden behind the curtain in the dark, and the space intervening, keeping their virtue safe.

Sometimes a man leaned up against the grating and whispered to his sweetheart through the bars, holding her hand in his. The passers-by affected not to see them, and either stepped into the street or looked with half-averted eyes, at the first act in life's great comedy.

In the great palm-tree planted square the salmon-coloured plaster seats were filled with men, who seemed to live there day and night, contributing their quota to the ceaseless national expenditure of talk. On this occasion they discussed, being all *intelligentes*, each incident and action of the fight, the old men deprecating modern innovation and sighing for the times and styles of Cucháres, or el Zeño Romero, he who first brought the art of bull-fighting from heaven, as his admirers say. If a girl, rich or poor, a countess from Madrid, or maiden of the Caloró from the Triana, chanced to pass, they criticised her, as a prospective buyer does a horse or as a

dealer looks down a slave at Fez. Her eyes, her feet, her air, each detail of her dress were all passed in review, and if found pleasing, then came the approving, Blessed be your mother! with other compliments of a nature to make a singer at a Paris *café-concert* blush. The recipient took it all as a matter of every-day occurrence, and with a smile or word of thanks, according to her rank, pursued the uneven tenour of her way with heightened colour, and perhaps a little more *meneo* of her hips and swaying of her breasts.

In the Calle Sierpes, the main artery and chief bazaar, roofed with an awning right from end to end, the people swarmed like ants, passing, and then repassing in a stream. *Cafés* were gorged with clients, all talking of the bull-fight, cursing the Government, or else disputing of the beauty and the nature of the women of their respective towns. The clubs, with windows of plate glass down to the ground, showed the *haute gomme* lounging in luxury upon their plush-upholstered chairs, stiff in their English clothes, and sweating blood and water in the attempt to look like Englishmen, and to keep up an unconcerned appearance under the public gaze. Girls

selling lemonade, *horchata, agráz*, with the thick, sticky sweetmeats, and the white, flaky pastry flavoured with fennel and angelica, left by the Moors in Spain, went up and down crying their wares, and offering themselves to anyone who wished to venture half a dollar on the chance. The shops were full of all those unconsidered trifles, which in Spain alone can find a market, cheap and abominably nasty, making one think that our manufactories must be kept running with a view to furnish idiots or blind men, with things they do not want.

After the gospel comes the sermon; sherry after soup, and when the bloodshed of the day has stirred men's pulses, they drift instinctively towards the dancing-houses, just as a drunkard in the morning turns back again to drink, to give another fillip to the blood. Men streamed to the Burrero, at whose narrow doors sat ancient hags selling stale flowers and cheaply painted matchboxes, pushing and striving in the narrow passage to make their way inside. The temple of the dance was an enormous building, barn-like and dusty, and with its emptiness made manifest by oil-lamps stuck about the walls.

The floor was sanded and in the middle of

it, at little wooden tables, seated on rickety cane chairs, was the fine flower of the rascality of Spain, whilst round the walls stood groups of men, who by their dress might have been Chulos or Chalanes, loafers or horse-copers, all with their hair brushed forward on their foreheads and plastered to the head.

All wore tight trousers moulded to the hips, short and frogged jackets, and all had flat felt hats with a stiff brim, which now and then they ran their fingers round to see if it was straight.

Others were wrapped in tattered cloaks, and mixed with them were herdsmen and some shepherds, with here and there a bull-fighter and here and there a pimp.

In the crank, shaky gallery was a dark box or two, unswept and quite unfurnished, save for a bunch or two of flowers painted upon the plaster, and a poor lithograph of the reigning sovereign, flanking a bull-fighter. One was quite empty, and in the other sat two foreign ladies, come to see life in Seville, who coughed and rubbed their eyes in the blue haze of cigarette smoke, which filled the building, just as the incense purifies a church with its mysterious fumes.

Set in a row across the stage, like flowers in

a bed, were six or seven girls. Their faces painted in the fashion of the place, without concealment, just like the ladies whom Velazquez drew, gave them a look of artificiality, which their cheap boots, all trodden down at the heel, and hair dressed high upon the head, with a comb upon the top and a red flower stuck behind the ear, did little to redeem.

Smoking and pinching one another they sat waiting for their turn, exchanging jokes occasionally with their acquaintances in front, and now and then one or the other of them rising from her chair walked to the looking-glasses placed on each side of the stage, and put her hair in order, patting it gently at the side and shaking out her clothes, just as a bird shakes out its feathers after it rolls itself in dust.

On one side of the stage sat the musicians, two at the guitar and two playing small instruments known as bandurrias—a cross between the mandoline and a guitar, played with a piece of quill. The women suddenly began to clap their hands in a strange rhythm, monotonous at first, but which at length, like the beating of a tom-tom, makes the blood boil, quiets the audience, stills conversation, and focusses all eyes upon the stage. The strange accompani-

ment, with the hands swept across the strings, making a whir as when a turkey drags its wings upon the ground, went on eternally. Then, one broke out into a half-wild song, the interval so strange, the time so wavering, and so mixed up the rhythm, that at first hearing it scarcely seems more pleasing than the howling of a wolf, but bit by bit goes to the soul, stirs up the middle marrow of the bones, and leaves all other music ever afterwards, tame and unpalatable.

The singing terminated abruptly, as it seemed, for no set reason, and died away in a prolonged high note, and then a girl stood up, encouraged by her fellows with shouts of "*Venga Juana*," "*Vaya salerosa*," and a cross fire of hats thrown on the stage, and interjections from the audience of "*Tu sangre*" or "*Tu enerpo*" and the inspiriting clap of hands, which never ceases till the dancer, exhausted, sinks down upon a chair. Amongst the audience, drinking their Manzanilla in little tumblers about the thickness of a piece of sugar-cane, eating their *boquerones*, ground nuts, and salted olives, the fire of criticism never stopped, as everyone in Seville of the lower classes is a keen critic both of dancing-

girls and bulls. Of the elder men, a gipsy, though shouting "*Salero!*" in a perfunctory manner, seemed discontented, and recalled the prowess of a dancer long since dead, by name Aurora, surnamed La Cujiñi, and gave it as his faith that since his time no girl had ever mastered all the mysteries of the dance. The Caloró, who always muster strong at the Burrero, all were upon his side, and seemed inclined to enforce their arguments with their shears, which, as most of them maintain themselves by clipping mules, they carry in their sash.

Then, just as the discussion seemed about to end, in a free fight, a girl stepped out to dance. None had remarked her sitting quietly beside the rest; still, she was slightly different in appearance from all the others in the room, both in her air and dress.

A gipsy at first sight, with the full lustrous eyes her people brought from far Multán, dressed in a somewhat older fashion than the rest, her hair brought low upon her forehead and hanging on her shoulders after the style of 1840, her skirt much flounced, low shoes tied round the ankle, a Chinese shawl across her shoulders, and with a look about her, as she

walked to the middle of the stage, as of a mare about to kick. A whisper to the first guitar caused him with a smile to break into a Tango, his instrument well *requintado* striking the chords with every finger of his hand at the same instant, as the wild Moorish melody jingled and jarred out and quivered in the air.

She stood a moment motionless, her eyes distending slowly and focussing the attention of the audience on her, and then a sort of shiver seemed to run over her, the feet gently began to scrape along the floor, her naked arms moved slowly with her fingers curiously bent, and meant perhaps to indicate by their position, the symbols of the oldest of religions, and, as the gipsies say, she drew the heart of every onlooker into her net of love. Twisting her hips till they seem ready to disjoint, and writhing like a snake, dragging her skirt up on the stage, she drew herself up to her full height, thrust all her body forward, her hands moved faster, and the short sleeves slipped back exhibiting black tufts of hair under her arms, glued to her skin with sweat. Then she wreathed forwards, backwards, looked at the audience with defiance, took a man's hat from off the stage, placed it upon her head, put both her

arms akimbo, swayed to and fro, but still kept writhing as if her veins were full of quicksilver. Little by little the frenzy died away, her eyes grew dimmer, the movements of the body slower, then with a final stamp, and a hoarse guttural cry, she stood a moment quiet, as it is called, *dormida*, that is, asleep, looking a very statue of impudicity and lust. The audience sat a moment spellbound, with open mouths like Satyrs, and in the box where were the foreign ladies, one had turned pale resting her head upon the other's shoulder, who held her round the waist. Then with a mighty shout, the applause broke forth, hats rained upon the stage, *Oles* and *Vayas* rent the air, and the old gipsy bounded on the table with a shout, "One God, one Cujiñi"; but in the tumult, La Cujiñi had disappeared, gone from the eyes of Caloró and of Busné, Gipsy and Gentile, and the Burrero never saw her more.

Perhaps, at witches' sabbaths she still dances, or perhaps in that strange Limbo where the souls of gipsies and their donkeys dree their weird, she writhes and dislocates her hips in the Romalis, or in the Óle, she drags her skirts on the floor, with a faint rustling sound.

Sometimes the curious may see her still, dancing before a Venta in the blurred outline of a Spanish lithograph, her head thrown back, her hair, *en catagon*, with one foot pointing to a hat to show her power over, and her contempt for all the sons of man, just as she did upon that evening when she took a brief and fleeting reincarnation to breathe once more the air of Seville, heavy with perfume of spring flowers, mixed with the scent of blood.

UN AUTRE MONSIEUR

I HAD lost sight of Elise, said my friend, until one day as I was walking past, I am not sure if it was Woolland's or some other shop, I met her face to face. She seemed a little thin, I thought, and though she walked as gracefully as ever, holding her skirt up in the way that only her compatriots ever can compass, she looked so pale I saw that she was ill.

"What is the matter, Elise?" I said; "is it an affection of the heart?" To which she answered with a side look at the window of the shop to see if her hat was straight, "No, not of the heart; you forget that we professionals [she pronounced the word 'professionelles'] are quite impervious in that region; it is the chest I suffer from. The doctors say it is the life I have to lead—but really I have had congestion of the lungs."

We went to lunch just opposite in the grill-room of the hotel, where she insisted upon taking what she called "*La table de l'adultère,*"

for she declared as it was in a dark corner she had noticed several affairs ripen, as she expressed it, in the surrounding gloom.

She asked for mineral water, and consommé with an egg in it, and proceeded with her tale.

"Things had been bad with me . . . how, I don't know. . . . They go in cycles, I suppose; for at one time I had, as you know, half the Turf Club . . . how shall I put it . . . on my books?" She made a gesture with her hand, graceful and gracious, to the waiter, who was offering her a dish, and bit her lip and smiled as a man passed in with his wife and daughter, whispering to me, "He is a client," and then coughing a little, began again to talk.

I looked at her with interest, and saw how she had fallen away, that her collar-bones made ridges in her light summer blouse. "Ah yes, I see why you are looking," she said; "it is dreadful to be thin, that is to say, in my line of business, for men seem to like women to be fat, and I am nothing but old bones."

"I think it was a cold I caught coming back from France, where I had been to see my mother. Yes, do not laugh, and please say nothing about *ma mère;* for I know you insularies see something comic about that. We,

on the other hand, are much more lovers of our family than you, though you think not. Of course, both men and nations always plume themselves on qualities they lack. Yes, I am quite a little of a philosopher, that is, since I was ill. Well, well, it was congestion, as I said, which nailed me to my bed. When you are young and strong and nearly six feet high, as I am," and here she straightened herself up with pride, looking a true descendant of the pirates (she came from Normandy), with her fresh colour, bright grey eyes, and masses of fair hair, "it is silly to be ill. Illness in our profession usually takes us soon to the end of our resources, for we, of course, must make a good appearance, and frequent good restaurants, then we are always robbed by all who deal with us.

"Illness too lifts the veil, or the veneer of chivalry which most of our friends assume to us, although, of course, it also brings out what is good.

"I become a moralist, you see, a dreadful thing in one who has to chatter always and be gay. Ah!" and an ashy look came on her cheeks, "those awful conversations about horses, bad plays, and books, and pictures that

you would not use in a back kitchen as a screen. I think the frankly indecent even harasses me less. Your countrymen, you'll pardon me, I know, have little *talent de société*, or perhaps they keep it all for those they think that they respect, that is, if any Englishman really respects a woman in his heart. Chivalry, eh—bah, we see what that means. Either the idea is real, or else it is a fraud. If it is real, it should make a man the same to every woman, especially to us who minister to his pleasures and act as lightning conductors to his home. That sets me thinking"—and here that wintry smile she used as an armour flitted across her face—"why a man's home is to be pure and a woman's not so, for strange as it may seem I have a home, that is a house in which I live. When a man leaves me with his 'Good night, old girl,' I often wonder if he thinks his home is purified by what has taken place in mine. Well, well," and as she drank her coffee, her eyes wandered to the man she knew who, seated with his daughter and his wife, kept his face turned away.

"Yes," she said, "there is a man who, no doubt, in his own home is kind enough, as men are kind, if all goes right with them. You see,

I and his daughter, are almost of one age . . . a pretty girl enough she is, and would look better if only she wore good stays. How strange it is, here in this island, you so often see expensive clothes ill-worn and spoiled by villainous bad stays or made ridiculous by a cheap pair of boots, or something of that kind.

"When I fell ill, and when the doctors said I must go home and not live as I had been doing, the father of that girl was one of those to whom I went for help. He never answered when I wrote him, nor for that matter did any of the men who used to like to take me to the theatres when I was well and was a credit to their taste."

She paused and waived away a cigarette, saying she did not want to look like a *bourgeoise en goguette*, and as the man she said she knew walked out behind his women-folk, fixed her eyes on him, till he reddened, as she put it, "at the back of his neck between the collar and the hair."

Then smiling and coughing now and then, she told how one of her friends had pawned her rings to send her home to France and, turning serious, said, "Now I will tell you of a trouble I am in. You know that women of our

class, if by some accident we fall in love, love far more fiercely than those that you call honest. I know the Spanish proverb about our love—that it resembles nothing but a fire of straw—but, there, it was concocted by a man . . . *les hommes, ça vous abîment une femme.* Personally I have never felt it . . . that is, but once or twice at most, and each time have regretted it, both for myself and him. You smile when I say 'him,' but it is true. However, that is not now what troubles me, but this.

"I know I cannot follow up this life, nor wish to, and I have told you that it was my ambition to study Art and try and learn to paint. No, no, I do not think I am a genius . . . nothing of the sort, but still I think I might have made a living in the Art world had I but had the chance. Now, though, the thing for me is how to live at all. I think I told you that I was a *mannequin* in a great Paris shop. I am you see both tall and elegant. . . . No, don't laugh . . . it is so; for I was born, although my family was poor, with an innate sense of elegance in dress . . . the sentiment of rags." This was so manifestly true, my friend said nothing, but merely nodded, wondering what she would say. "I cannot go back to that way

of life; for during the past years I have lived in luxury, that is to say, I have enjoyed a luxury tempered by the ever-present dread of want, but still a luxury. I have read books and haunted the museums; I know the various schools of painting tolerably well, revel in Corot, adore Degas and Monet, think Whistler inspired, and therefore cannot go home and settle down, marrying some *Betrave* or another, perhaps a local cattle-dealer or something of the sort. Now, though, a chance has come into my life, and I can neither jump at it nor yet neglect it; for as I told you I am *très bonne fille*, and would not like to wreck the life of anyone, especially of one who says he loves me . . . yes, loves me as I am."

She put a falling hairpin back into her hair, played with her bag, taking it up and looking at the clasp. Then put it down and after having sipped her coffee, began again to talk.

"The thing is this way . . . I had a lover—a *vieux colonel*, not a bad sort of man, stiff, angular, and with his face reddened by whisky and the sun of India, just such a man as Loti talks about, honourable I think, and wearisome. He liked to spend long hours with me, drinking

and telling me about himself, his life, his horses and the women that he thought that he had loved, *Cocasse*, *le Colonel*, but still a gentleman. One day he brought an officer of his to see me. He was, I think, from Lancashire, some kind of a provincial anyway, and above all a type.

"What was he like? Well, short and freckled; such feet and hands, and with a neck the colour of a lobster, with the sun. His clothes not bad, but with a note of something of *le gentilhomme campagnard* about them. For a watch-chain, a leather . . . lip strap, I think, you call the thing . . . it go beneath the curb, and he tell me it is for when the horse shakes his head, so that he cannot turn the bit. and run away with you. Over his boots little white gaiters; and gloves, such gloves—so thick, like the stuff you make a fencing-jacket. Fair hair, what of it was left—not that he was bald, but I mean what the barber he have left—a mouth with teeth like a shark, an eye-glass, and a perpetual transpiration on his skin. Not pleasant-looking, eh? That where you make a mistake, then. He did look pleasant, and a gentleman, although he never said a word but 'Aoh yes, awful pleased to meet yer,' with

an occasional 'Ha,' which at first made me jump.

"Why the colonel brought him I never could make out, but from the first night I saw his junior officer had fallen in love with me.

"I am not as a rule nervous . . . well . . . under fire; but this man, his very bashfulness made me feel like a milkmaid when her lover sits upon a gate and whistles at her. Not a word did he say whilst his superior officer imbibed champagne, and talked of horses he had known thirty or forty years ago, except to interject a 'Ha' at intervals. At last, though, it seemed near ending, the colonel rose to go. He pulled me to him, and giving me a winy kiss or two, remarked, 'Good-bye, old girl, we're going now. Ta! ta! Be virtuous and you'll be unhappy,' or something of the kind.

"I turned, and saw to my amazement that the lieutenant, who had drunk little, that is for one of his great bulk, had turned quite pale, and glared with rage at his commanding officer.

"He let his eye-glass fall with a loud chink against his waistcoat buttons, and holding out his hand, said, 'Good-bye; some day I'll call

again'; so like a gentleman I—I own, was surprised.

"After a day or two, I got a letter from him—not too well written, and with a fault or two in the orthography—saying he meant to come and see me to-morrow afternoon.

"Of course I thought it was the usual kind of thing, and when the time came dressed myself in a light peignoir, laced, and with views to the inside, as we say. It suited me, fair as I am, and with my yellow hair, for it was colour *eau de Nil*, and as the gladiators when they marched round the ring no doubt put on their best, I always like to look my best when I expect to be a sacrifice.

"Punctually at the time he said, my officer came in. I came to meet him, smiling, thinking perhaps that he would kiss me, after the fashion of his kind, who do not generally waste time in words or in preliminaries. However, he held out his hand, and said a little stiffly, 'Glad to see you looking well,' and, sitting down upon a chair, began to look at me. What an original, I thought, as he kept staring at me, until I half began to blush with his continued gaze.

"His eyes roved round the room, and now

and then his monocle fell, and he would put it back again, with a contortion of his face, like something on the stage.

"At last he fixed his eyes upon a picture that I had . . . well, *un peu leste*, but nothing very shocking, and turning red, he pointed up at it, observing, 'What a beastly thing. Ha! yes, abominable.' I did not know if I should laugh or be angry, but going to it, turned it round against the wall, and said, 'Now are you satisfied?' Then with some difficulty and with a number of 'Ha's' to help him through his tale, he said he loved me. I had not heard a man say that for the last five years, and it took me by surprise, so I said nothing, and I think turned red a little. Still I did not take in his meaning, and made a motion as of rising, for I expected he was like the rest of them. 'Not that,' he said. 'By God! Ha! No, I really mean it. Miss Elise, I love you awfully.'

"Still I said nothing, for what on earth was there to say? After a little while he went away, but came again at intervals, always the same—stiff, red, and awkward, and with the same song on his lips.

"At last one day, quite *à brûle-pourpoint*, he

asked me would I marry him, but quite respectfully, and in a way that rather made me like him . . . it was phenomenal. What could I say, especially as after saying what he had he took my hand and, looking at me through his monocle, said, 'Could you love a fellow?'

"I was sore put to it, for I saw that I had to do with quite another sort of monsieur to him I told you of before.

"Love and my officer were not to be carried in one bag. Well, I felt grateful to him, for I understood the sacrifice he was prepared to make far better than he did himself, poor innocent.

"When he had pressed me for an answer, I told him all that he would have to undergo if I said 'Yes' to him. His horses—I had not told you he was in the cavalry—would all have to be sold. He gulped a little comically, for he was a great polo player, but manfully agreed. As his own colonel knew me, he would have to change into another regiment. . . . I thought of foot. . . . Of course I had to do the thinking . . . and go to India. He said that it would be a wrench, and that the Grabbies were a beastly lot. However, he would do it all, if I would love a fellow.

"As he talked on and held my hand, at first half timidly and then as in a vice, I rather liked him: he was so childlike and original; but an original.

"Love—no, that was impossible, and so I told him. His face fell for a minute, but he returned again, back to the charge. He didn't care. Ha! no, not a bit. I was the only woman that he ever cared for, and if I only would consider, take time, er—he did not wish to hurry me . . . so like a gentleman."

Elise stopped for a moment, and then——

"I have taken time to think of it, and cross to-night to France, paying my passage with the money that my friend pawned her rings to get for me. His money I refused to take. . . . I, too, have honour . . . and the best thing for me is to go home to my own village Pont de l'Evêque, and try and get my health.

"Then I shall live *en paysanne*, go to bed early, and in the morning hear the swallows in the roof; there used to be a nest above my window three or four years ago. How good their morals are compared to ours . . . I mean the swallows. 'Tis quite an idyll to see them

feed their young ones, and the male never looks at any bird, except his *légitime*.

"When I feel better I shall go to Mass, not that I am a firm believer, still less a practiser, but the thing does you good somehow—perhaps the singing, or perhaps the recollection of one's childhood, or something of the kind.

"So I am off, and in a day or two shall be perhaps wandering along the Chaussée, with its double rows of trees, silvery, and looking like a Corot against the fields of corn.

"I shall be thinking of what I told you, and of how difficult it is to love a fellow. Then, when I am better, who knows what I shall do? . . . Ah! *méchant*. No, never, I swear it; he said he never would till we were married . . . you see he was not in the least like you, or any other man."

CHRISTIE CHRISTISON

Of all the guests that used to come to Claraz's Hotel, there was none stranger, or more interesting than Christie Christison, a weather-beaten sailor, who still spoke his native dialect of Peterhead, despite his thirty years out in the Plate. He used to bring an air into the room with him of old salt fish and rum, and of cold wintry nights in the low latitudes down by the Horn. This, too, though it was years since he had been at sea.

Although the world had gone so well with him, and by degrees he had become one of the biggest merchants in the place, he yet preserved the speech and manners of a Greenland whaler, which calling he had followed in his youth.

The Arctic cold and tropic suns during the years that he had traded up and down the coast had turned his naturally fair complexion to a mottled hue, and whisky, or the sun, had touched his nose so fiercely that it furnished a

great fund of witticism amongst the other guests.

Mansel said that the skipper's nose reminded him of the port light of an old sugar droger, and Cossart had it, that no chemist's window in Montmartre had any *flacon*, bottle you call him, eh? of such resplendent hue. Most of them knew he had a history, but no one ever heard him tell it, although it was well known he had come out from Peterhead in the dark ages, when Rosas terrorised the Plate, in his own schooner, the *Rosebud*, and piled her up at last, somewhere on the Patagonian coast, upon a trip down to the Falkland Islands. He used to talk about his schooner as if she had been one of the finest craft afloat; but an old Yankee skipper, who had known her, swore she was a bull-nosed, round-sterned sort of oyster-mouching vessel, with an old deck-house like a town hall, straight-sided, and with a lime-juice look about her that made him tired.

Whatever were her merits or her faults, she certainly had made her skipper's fortune, or at least laid the foundation of it; for, having started as a trader, he gradually began to act, half as a carrier, half as a mail-boat, going to

Stanley every three months or so with mails and letters, and coming back with wool.

Little by little, aided by his wife, a stout, hard-featured woman, from his native town, he got a little capital into his hands.

When he was on a voyage, Jean used to search about to get a cargo for his next trip, so that when the inevitable came and the old *Rose-bud* ran upon the reef down at San Julian, Christie was what he called "weel-daein," and forsook the sea for good.

He settled down in Buenos Aires as a wool-broker, and by degrees altered his clothes, to the full-skirted coat of Melton cloth, with ample side-pockets, the heather-mixture trousers, and tall white hat, with a black band, that formed his uniform up to his dying day. He wore a Newgate frill of beard, and a blue necktie, which made a striking contrast with his face, browned by the sun and wind, and skin like a dried piece of mare's hide, through which the colour of his northern blood shone darkly, like the red in an old-fashioned cooking apple after a touch of frost.

Except a few objurgatory phrases, he had learned no Spanish, and his own speech remained the purest dialect of Aberdeenshire

—coarse, rough and racy, and double-shotted with an infinity of oaths, relics of his old whaling days, when as he used to say he started life, like a young rook, up in the crow's-nest of a bluff-bowed and broad-beamed five-hundred barrel boat, sailing from Peterhead.

Things had gone well with him, and he had taken to himself as partner a fellow-countryman, one Andrew Nicolson, who had passed all his youth in Edinburgh, in an insurance office. Quiet, unassuming, and yet not without traces of that pawky humour which few Scots are born entirely lacking in, he had fallen by degrees into a sort of worship of his chief, whose sallies, rough and indecent as they often were, fairly convulsed him, making him laugh until the tears ran down his face, as he exclaimed, "Hear to him, man, he's awfu' rich, I'm tellin' ye."

Christie took little notice of his adoration except to say, "Andra man, dinna expose yourself," or something of the kind.

In fact, no one could understand how two such ill-assorted men came to be friends, except perhaps because they both were Scotchmen, or because Andrew's superior education

and well-brushed black clothes appealed to Christison.

He himself could not write, but knew enough to sign his name, which feat he executed with many puffings, blowings, and an occasional oath.

Still he was shrewd in business, which he executed almost entirely by telegram, refusing to avail himself of any code, saying, "he couldna stand them; some day ye lads will get a cargo of dolls' eyes, when ye have sent for maize. Language is gude enough for me, I hae no secrets. Damn yer monkey talk."

His house at Florés was the place of call of all the ship captains who visited the port. There they would sit and drink, talking about the want of lights on such and such a coast, of skippers who had lost their ships twenty or thirty years ago, the price of whale oil, and of things that interest their kind; whilst Mrs. Christison sat knitting, looking as if she never in her life had moved from Peterhead, in her grey gown and woollen shawl, fastened across her breast by a brooch, with a picture of her man, "in natural colouring." Their life was homely, and differed little from what it had been in the old days when they were poor,

except that now and then they took the air in an old battered carriage—which Christison had taken for a debt—looking uncomfortable and stiff, dressed in their Sunday clothes. Their want of knowledge of the language of the place kept them apart from others of their class, and Christison, although he swore by Buenos Aires, which he had seen emerge from a provincial town to a great city, yet cursed the people, calling them a "damned set of natives," which term he generally applied to all but Englishmen.

Certainly nothing was more unlike a "native" than the ex-skipper now turned merchant, in his ways, speech, and dress. Courtesy, which was innate in natives of the place, was to him not only quite superfluous, but a thing to be avoided, whilst his strange habit of devouring bread fresh from the oven, washed down with sweet champagne, gained him the name of the "Scotch Ostrich," which nickname he accepted in good part as a just tribute to his digestive powers, remarking that "the Baptist, John, ye mind, aye fed on locusts and wild honey, and a strong man aye liked strong meat, all the worrld o'er."

In the lives of the elderly Aberdeenshire

couple, few would have looked for a romantic story, for the hard-featured merchant and his quiet home-keeping wife appeared so happy and contented in their snug villa on the Florés road. No one in Buenos Aires suspected anything, and most likely Christison would have died, remembered only by his tall white hat, had he not one day chosen to tell his tale.

A fierce pampero had sprung up in an hour, the sky had turned that vivid green that marks storms from the south in Buenos Aires. Whirlfire kept the sky lighted, till an arch had formed in the south-east, and then the storm broke, blinding and terrible, with a strange, seething noise. The wind, tearing along the narrow streets, forced everyone to fly for refuge.

People on foot darted into the nearest house, and horsemen, flying like birds before the storm, sought refuge anywhere they could, their horses, slipping and sliding on the rough, paved streets, sending out showers of sparks as they stopped suddenly, just as a skater sends out a spray of ice. The deep-cut streets, with their raised pavements, soon turned to watercourses, from three to four feet deep, through which the current ran so fiercely that it was quite impossible to pass on foot. The

horsemen, galloping for shelter, passed through them with the water banking up against their horses on the stream side, though they plied whip and spurs.

After the first hour of the tempest, when a little light began to dawn towards the south, and the peals of thunder slacken a little in intensity, men's nerves became relaxed from the over-tension that a pampero brings with it, just as if nature had been overwound, and by degrees was paying out the chain.

Storm-stayed at Claraz's sat several men, Cossart, George Mansel, one Don José Hernandez and Christie Christison. Perhaps the pampero had strung up his nerves, or perhaps the desire that all men feel at times to tell what is expedient they should keep concealed, impelled him; but at any rate he launched into the story of his life, to the amazement of his friends, who never thought he either had a story to impart, or if he had that it would ever issue from his lips.

"Ye mind the *Rosebud?*" he remarked.

None of the assembled men had ever seen her, although she still was well remembered on the coast.

"Weel, weel, I mind the time she was well

kent, a bonny craft. Old Andrew Reid o' Buckieside, he built her, back in the fifties. When he went under, he had to sell his house of Buckieside. I bought her cheap.

"It's fifteen years and mair, come Martinmas, since I piled her up. . . . I canna think how I managed it, knowing the bay, San Julian, ye ken, sae weel.

"It was a wee bit hazy, but still I thought I could get in wi' the blue pigeon going.

"I mind it yet, ye see you hae to keep the rocks where they say they ganakers all congregate before they die, right in a line with yon bit island.

"I heard the water shoaling as the leadsman sung out in the chains, but still kept on, feeling quite sure I knew the channel, when, bang she touches, grates a little, and sticks dead fast, wi' a long shiver o' her keel. Yon rocks must have been sharp as razors, for she began to fill at once.

"No chance for any help down in San Julian Bay in those days, nothing but ane o' they *pulperias* kept by a Basque, a wee bit place, wi' a ditch and bank, and a small brass cannon stuck above the gate. I got what gear I could into the boat, and started for the beach.

"Jean, myself, three o' the men, and an old Dago I carried with me as an interpreter.

"The other sailormen, and a big dog we had aboard, got into the other boat, and we all came ashore. Luckily it was calm, and the old *Rosebud* had struck not above two or three hundred yards from land. Man, San Julian was a dreich place in they days, naething but the bit fortified *pulperia* I was tellin' ye aboot. The owner, old Don Augusty, a Basque, ye ken, just ca'ed his place the 'Rose of the South.' He micht as well have called it the Rose of Sharon. Deil a rose for miles, or any other sort of flower.

"Well, men, next day it just began to blow, and in a day or two knockit the old *Rosebud* fair to matchwood. Jean, she grat sair to see her gae to bits, and I cursit a while, though I felt like greetin' too, I'm tellin' ye. There we were sort o' marooned, a' the lot of us, without a chance of getting off maybe for months; for in these days devil a ship but an odd whaler now and then ever came nigh the place. By a special mercy Yanquetruz's band of they Pehuelches happened to come to trade.

"Quiet enough folk yon Indians, and Yan-

quetruz himself had been brocht up in Buenos Aires in a mission school.

"Man, a braw fellow! Six foot six at least, and sat his horse just like a picture. We bought horses from him, and got a man to guide us up to the Welsh settlement at Chubut, a hundred leagues away.

"Richt gude beasts they gave us, and we got through fine, though I almost thocht I had lost Jean.

"Yanquetruz spoke English pretty well, Spanish of course, and as I tellt ye, he was a bonny man.

"Weel, he sort o' fell in love wi' Jean, and one day he came up to the *pulperia*, and getting off his horse, a braw black piebald wi' an eye like fire intil him, he asked to speak to me. First we had Caña, and then Carlón, then some more Caña, and yon *vino seco*, and syne some more Carlón. I couldna richtly see what he was driving at. However, all of a sudden he says, 'Wife very pretty, Indian he like buy.'

"I told him Christians didna sell their wives, and we had some more Caña, and then he says, 'Indian like Christian woman, she more big, more white than Indian girl.'

"To make a long tale short, he offered me

his horse and fifty dollars, then several ganaker skins, they ca' them *guillapices*, and finally in addition a mare and foal. Man, they were bonny beasts, both red roan piebalds, and to pick any Indian girl I liked. Not a bad price down there at San Julian, where the chief could hae cut all our throats had he been minded to.

"... Na, na, we werna' fou, just a wee miraculous. Don Augusty was sort o' scared when he heard what Yanquetruz was saying, and got his pistol handy and a bit axe he keepit for emergencies behind the counter. Losh me, yon Yanquetruz was that ceevil, a body couldna tak fuff at him.

"At last I told him I wasna on to trade, and we both had a tot of square-faced gin to clean our mouths a bit, and oot to the *palenque*, where the chief's horse was tied.

"A bonny beastie, his mane hogged and cut into castles, like a clipped yew hedge, his tail plaited and tied with a piece of white mare's hide, and everything upon him solid silver, just like a dinner-service.

"The chief took his spear in his hand—it had been stuck into the ground—and leaning on it, loupit on his horse. Ye ken they deevils mount frae the off-side. He gied a yell that

fetched his Indians racing. They had killed a cow, and some of them were daubed with blood; for they folk dinna wait for cooking when they are sharp set. Others were three-parts drunk, and came stottering along, with square-faced gin bottles in their hands.

"Their horses werna tied, nor even hobbled. Na, na, they just stood waiting with the reins upon the ground. Soon as they saw the chief—I canna tell ye how the thing was done—they widna mount, they didna loup, they just melted on their beasts, catching the spears out of the ground as they got up.

"Sirs me, they Indians just took flight like birds, raising sich yellochs, running their horses up against each other, twisting and turning and carrying on in sich a way, just like fishing-boats running for harbour at Buckie or Montrose.

"Our guide turned out a richt yin, and brocht us through, up to Chubut wi'out a scratch upon the paint.

"A pairfect pilot, though he had naething in the wide world to guide him through they wild stony plains.

"That's how I lost the *Rosebud*, and noo, ma freens, I'll tell you how it was I got Jean, but that was years ago.

"In my youth up in Peterhead I was a sailor-man. I went to sea in they North Sea whaling craft, Duff and McAlister's, ye ken. As time went on, I got rated as a harpooner . . . mony's the richt whale I hae fastened into. That was the time when everything was dune by hand. Nane of your harpoon guns, nane of your dynamite, naething but muscle and a keen eye. First strike yer whale, and then pull after him. Talk of yer fox hunts . . . set them up, indeed.

"Jean's father keepit a bit shop in Aberdeen, and we had got acquaint. I cannot richtly mind the way o' it. Her father and her mother were aye against our marryin,' for ye ken I had naething but my pay, and that only when I could get a ship. Whiles, too, I drinkit a wee bit. Naething to signify, but then Jean's father was an elder of the kirk, and maist particular.

"Jean was a bonny lassie then, awfu' high-spirited. I used to wonder whiles, if some day when her father had been oot at the kirk, someone hadna slippit in to tak tea with her mither. . . . I ken I'm haverin'.

"Weel, we were married, and though we lo'ed each other, we were aye bickerin'. Maistly

aboot naething, but ye see, we were both young and spirited. Jean liket admiration, which was natural enough at her age, and I liket speerits, so that ane night, after a word or two, I gied her bit daud or two, maybe it was the speerits, for in the morning when I wakit I felt about for Jean, intending to ask pardon, and feelin' a bit shamed. There was no Jean, and I thocht that she was hidin' just to frichten me.

"I called, but naething, and pittin' on ma clothes. searchit the hoose, but there was naebody. She left no message for me, and nane of the neighbours kent anything aboot her.

"She hadna' gone to Aberdeen, and though her father and me searchit up and doon, we got no tidings of her. Sort o' unchancy, just for a day or two. However, there was naething to be done, and in a month or so I sold my furniture and shipped for a long cruise.

"Man, a long cruise it was, three months or more blocked in the ice, and then a month in Greenland trying to get the scurvy out of the ship's company, and so one way or another, about seven months slipped past before we sighted Peterhead. Seven months without a sight of any woman; for, men, they Esquimaux

aye gied me a skunner wi' their fur clothes and oily faces, they lookit to be baboons.

"We got in on a Sabbath, and I am just tellin' ye, as soon as I was free, maybe about three o' the afternoon, I fairly ran all the way richt up to Maggie Bauchop's.

"I see the place the noo, up a bit wynd. The town was awfu' quiet, and no one cared to pass too close to the wynd foot in daylight, for fear o' the clash o' tongues. I didna care a rap for that, if there had been a lion in the path, same as once happened to ane o' the prophets. Balaam, I think it was, in the old Book. I wouldna hae stood back a minute if there had been a woman on the other side.

"Weel, I went up to the door, and rappit on it. Maggie came to it, and says she, 'Eh, Christie, is that you?' for she aye kent a customer. A braw, fat woman, Maggie Bauchop was. For years she had followed the old trade, till she had pit awa' a little siller, and started business for hersel'.

"Weel she kent a' the tricks o' it, and still she was a sort of God-fearin' kind o' bitch . . . treated her lassies weel, and didna cheat them about their victuals and their

claithes. 'Come in,' she says, 'Christie, my man. Where hae ye come from?'

"I tellt her, and says I, 'Maggie, gie us yer best, I've been seven months at sea.'

"'Hoot, man,' she says, 'the lassies arena up; we had a fearfu' spate o' drink yestreen, an awfu' lot of ships is in the port. Sit ye doon, Christie. Here's the old Book to ye. Na, na, ye needna look at it like that; there's bonny pictures in it, o' the prophets . . . each wi' his lass, ye ken.'

"When she went out, I looked a little at the book—man, a fine hot one, and then as the time passed I started whistlin' a tune, something I had heard up aboot Hammerfest. The door flees open, and in walks Maggie, looking awfu' mad.

"'Christie,' she skirls, 'I'll hae na whistlin' in ma hoose, upon the Sabbath day. I canna hae my lassies learned sich ways, so stop it, or get out.'

"Man, I just lauch at her, and I says, 'The lassies, woman; whistlin' can hardly hurt them, considerin' how they live.'

"Maggie just glowered at me, and 'Christie, she says, 'you and men like ye may defile their bodies; but whilst I live na one shall

harm their souls, puir lambies, wi' whistlin' on His day. No, not in my hoose, that's what I'm tellin' ye.'

"I laughed, and said, 'Weel, send us in ane o' your lambies! and turned to look at a picture of Queen Victoria's Prince Albert picnickin' at Balmoral. When I looked round a girl had come into the room. She was dressed in a striped sort of petticoat and a white jacket, a blouse I think ye ca' the thing, and stood wi' her back to me as she was speaking to Maggie at the door.

"I drew her to me, and was pulling her towards the bed—seven months at sea, ye ken—when we passed by a looking-glass. I saw her face in it, just for a minute, as we were sort o' strugglin'. Ma God, I lowsed her quick enough, and stotterin' backwards sat down upon a chair. 'Twas Jean, who had run off after the bit quarrel that we had more than a year ago. I didna speak, nor did Jean say a word.

"What's that you say?

"Na, na, ma ain wife in sichlike a place, hae ye no delicacy, man? I settled up wi' Maggie, tellin' her Jean was an old friend o' mine, and took her by the hand. We gaed

away to Edinburgh, and there I married her again; sort of haversome job; but Jean just wanted it, ye ken. How she came there I never asked her.

"Judge not, the ould Book says, and after all 'twas me gien' her the daud. Weel, weel, things sort of prospered after that. I bought the *Rosebud*, and as ye know piled her up and down at San Julian, some fifteen years ago.

"I never raised ma hand on Jean again. Na, na, I had suffered for it, and Jean if so be she needed ony sort of purification, man, she got it, standing at the wheel o' nichts on the old schooner wi' the spray flyin', on the passage out.

"Not a drop, thankye, Don Hosey. Good nicht, Mr. Mansel; bongsoir, Cossart, I'm just off hame. Jean will be waiting for me."

A PRINCESS

NOTHING is wilder than the long stretch of sandy coast which runs from the East Neuk of Fife right up to Aberdeen.

Inland, the windswept fields, with their rough walls, without a kindly feal upon the top, as in the west, look grim and uninviting in their well-farmed ugliness.

The trees are low and stunted, and grow twisted by the prevailing fierce east winds, all to one side, just like the trees so often painted by the Japanese upon a fan.

The fields run down, until they lose themselves in sandy links, clothed with a growth of bent.

After the links, there intervenes a shingly beach, protected here and there by a low reef of rocks, all honeycombed and limpet-ridden, from which streamers of dulse float in the ceaseless surge.

Then comes the sea, grey, sullen, always on the watch to swallow up the fishermen, whose

little brown-sailed boats seem to be scudding ceaselessly before the easterly haar towards some harbour's mouth.

Grey towns, with houses roofed with slabs of stone, cluster round little churches built so strongly that they have weathered reformations and the storms of centuries.

Grey sky, grey sullen sea, grey rocks, and a keen whistling wind that blows from the North Sea, which seems to turn the very air a steely grey, have given to the land a look of hardness not to be equalled upon earth.

One sees at first sight that in the villages no children could have ever danced upon the green. No outward visible sign of any inward graces can be seen in the hard-featured people, whose flinty-looking cheeks seem to repel the mere idea of kisses, and yet down in whose hearts exists a vein of sentiment for which in other and more favoured lands a man might search in vain. As any district, country, or race of men must have its prototype, its spot or person that sums up and typifies the whole, so does this hard, grey land find its quintessence in the town of Buckiehaven, a windswept fisher village, built on a spit of sand.

Its little church is stumpier than all the other

little churches of the coast. Its houses are more angular, their crowsteps steeper, and the gnarled plane trees that have fought for life against its withering blasts, more dwarfish and ill-grown. The fisherfolk seem ruddier, squarer, and more uncouth than are their fellows.

Their little wave-washed harbour looks narrower and still more dangerous than the thousand other little harbours that dot the coast from Kinghorn to St. Forts.

Still in the churchyard in which the graves of mariners, of old sea-captains (who once sailed, drank, and suffered, where their descendants, now sail, drink, and suffer), lie thick, each waiting for the pilot, the headstones looking to the sea, their Mecca, there is an air of rest. The graves all look out seawards, where their hearts lived, and yet most of the denizens returned to lay their bones in the old paroch where in their youth they must have run about, clattering like ponies on the grey causeway stones. Yet there are gravestones which relate that Andrew Brodie or George Anstruther, were buried in the deep and that their monument was raised by Agnes, Janet, or some other sorrowing wife, in the full hope of their salvation, with a text drawn from the minor

prophets and unintelligible to any eyes but those of love and faith.

The lettering on the stones is cut so deeply that in that mossless land it looks as fresh as when the widow and the local stonemason stood chaffering for its price, surrounded by her flaxen-headed children, whom in good time the sea would claim, taking them from her as relentlessly as it had claimed her man.

Only a little lichen here and there, yellow and looking like a stain, shows that time and the weather have both wrought their worst and failed to get a hold, so hard the whinstone, and so good the workmanship.

In the low, wiry grass the graves look like a flock of sheep, the rough-built wall keeps them from straying, and the squat cock upon the spire, that creaks so harshly in the wind, looks down upon them and does not crow, because it knows the inmates are asleep.

So they sleep on, sleeping a longer watch below than any that they ever had on earth, when the shrill boatswain's whistle roused them at each recurring period of four hours, or a shout called them all on deck to shorten sail.

All round the churchyard wall are old-world tombs, of worthies of the places—Brodies and

Griersons, Selkirks and Anstruthers—adorned with emblems of their trades, as mallets, shears, and chisels, with a death's-head and cross-bones crowning all, to show not only that the skeleton had sat unbidden at life's feast, but after a full meal still lingered with his hosts.

The whinstone church, hardly distinguishable from the rocks beside the harbour, in colour and in shape, the little burial-ground more like a sheep-pen than a cemetery, the high-pitched house-roofs in the steep stony staircases of streets, all give the idea of a corner of the world to which no stranger could have penetrated except by accident. If such a one there were, he must have felt himself indeed a foreigner in such an isolated spot.

Yet on the south side of the church, set perhaps by accident to catch the little sun that ever shines upon that drear East Neuk, there is a slab let in, or stuck against the wall.

Upon the granite tablet, edged round with a supposititious Gothic scroll, cut into flowers like pastry ornaments upon a pie, the letters poorly executed, showing up paltry in their shallowness, beside the lettering of the staunch old tombs amongst the grass, is written, "Here

lies Sinakalula, Princess of Raratonga, the beloved wife of Andrew Brodie, Mariner."

What were the circumstances of their meeting the stone does not declare, only that the deceased had been a princess in her native land, and had died in the obscure east-country haven, and had been "beloved."

Nothing, but all—at least all that life has to give.

The simple idyll of the princess and Andrew Brodie, mariner, is writ on the red marble slab, in letters less enduring than their love, badly designed and poorly cut, and destined soon to disappear in the cold rains and steely blasts of the East Neuk of Fife, and leave the stone a blank.

How they met, loved, and how the mariner brought home his island bride, perhaps to droop in the cold north, and how he laid her in the drear churchyard to wait the time when they should be united once again in some Elysian field, not unlike Polynesia, with the Tree of Life for palms, the selfsame opal-tinted sea, angels for tropic birds, and the same air of calm pervading all the air, only the mariner, if he still lives, can say.

The princess, as Andrew Brodie first saw

her, must have looked like the fair damsels Captain Cook describes, with perhaps just a slight tincture of the missionary school, but not enough to take away her grace.

Dressed in a coloured and diaphanous sacque, a wreath of red hibiscus round her head, her jet-black hair loose on her shoulders, bare arms and feet, and redolent of oil of cocoa-nut, she must have seemed a being from another world to the rough mariner.

How he appeared to her is harder to determine, perhaps as did Cortes to La Malinche, or as did Soto to the Indian queen amongst the Seminoles. True, we know what Cortes was like, how he rode like a centaur, was noble, generous, that he knew Latin, as Bernal Diaz says, and Soto was designed by nature to capture every heart. The Scottish sailor possibly appeared as the representative of a strange race, harder and fiercer, but more tender at the heart than her compatriots.

His steel-blue eyes may have appeared to her as hardly mortal; his rough and hairy hands, symbols of strength embodified; his halting speech, a homage to her charms. Then as he must have been an honest and true-hearted man, approaching her with the same

reverence with which he would have courted one of the hard-faced, red-headed women of his native place, not in the fashion of the trader or the beach-comber, it must have seemed as if a being, superior by its strength, had thrown its strength aside, all for her love.

When his ship sailed, the sailor may have hidden in the hills, then when her topsails had sunk well beneath the waves, and he was sure the ship would not return, come out of hiding, and strolled timidly along the beach, until some trader or the missionary came out and sheltered him.

Naturally, chiefs and missionaries and all the foreign population looked on his love as an infatuation; but he, setting to work, trading in copra and bêche-de-mer, in coral and the like, gradually made himself a man of consequence. Schooners would come consigned to him, and cargoes of his own lie heaped in *baracoons*, thatched with banana leaves.

At last, when he had "gathered siller" and become a man of substance—for Brodie certainly was one of those who could not stoop to live upon his wife—he must have gone and seen the missionary. One sees him sweating in his long-shore togs, a palm-tree hat upon his head,

toiling along the beach, and rapping at the door. The missionary, most likely a compatriot, bids him come in, and lays the "Word," which he has been translating into Polynesian, upon the table and welcomes him.

"I'm glad to see ye, Andrew. How time goes on. Now you're a man of substance, and will be sending for a wife . . . unless, indeed, you might think of Miss McKendrick, the new Bible-reader. A nice-like lass enough. No bonny, but then beauty, ye ken, is not enduring. . . . What, ye dinna say? I thocht ye had been cured o' all that foolishness. They island girls are a' like children. What sort of looking wife would she be to ye at hame, man Andrew?"

This may have passed, and then the wedding in the mission church, with the dusky catechumens looking stiff and angular in the death-dealing clothes of Christianity, the bride listening to the old-fashioned Scottish exhortation on the duties of her new estate, what time the chief, her father, a converted pagan, thought with regret of the marriage ceremonies that he had witnessed in his youth, so different from these.

It may have been that for a year or two

the ill-assorted pair lived happily, the husband trading and watching his men work in his garden, whilst his wife swung in a hammock underneath a tree. As time went by the recollection of the grey village in East Fife would come back to the husband's mind and draw him northwards, whilst the wife wondered what it was he thought about, and why the steely eyes seemed to look through her as if they sought for something that she could never see.

At last would come the day when he first spoke of going home, timidly, and as if feeling somehow he was about to commit a crime. Her tears and expostulations can be imagined, and then her Ruth-like resolution to follow him across the sea.

The voyage and the first touch of cold, the arrival in the bare and stormy land, the disappointment of poor Andrew, when he found he was forgotten by the great part of his friends, and that the rest despised him for having brought a coloured woman home, all follow naturally.

All the small jealousies and miseries of a provincial town, the horrors of the Scottish Sabbath, the ceaseless rain, the biting wind,

the gloom and darkness of the winter, the disappointment of the brief northern summer, the sea, in which none but a walrus or a seal could bathe, must have done their worst upon the island princess, now become in very truth the wife of Andrew Brodie, mariner. One sees her in her unbecoming European clothes, simple and yet accustomed to respect, exposed to all the harshness of a land in which though hearts are warm, they move so far beneath the surface that their pulsations hardly can be felt, except by those accustomed to their beat.

Then in the end consumption, that consumption that usually attacks a monkey when it passes north of forty, making its end so human and so pitiful, must have attacked her too.

Then the drear funeral, with Andrew and his friends in weepers and tall hats, which the east wind brushed all awry, making them look like ferrets; the little coffin with the outlandish name and date, and "in her thirtieth year" emblazoned on it in cheap brass lettering; and the sloping pile of shingly earth, so soon to be stamped down over the island flower.

Slowly the friends would go, after shaking Andrew by the hand. He, feeling vaguely

that he had murdered her whom he loved best, would linger, as a bird hovers for a time above the place where it has seen its mate fall, a mere mass of bloodstained feathers, to the gun.

When he was gone the island princess would be left alone with the wind sweeping across the sea, sounding around the Bass, and whistling wearily above Inch Keith to sing her threnody.

EL JEHAD

SI-TAHER-IBU-LEZRAC was discontented with everything he saw.

The world had altered since his youth, but he had never changed. Allah, he was certain, was still the same—the One, the Indivisible, the Laudable, the Beginner, the Restorer, the Victorious, the Merciful, the Compassionate; Mohammed, too, must certainly be still the Messenger of God, and if his glory was for the time eclipsed, he would shine forth again, just as the sun shines forth, after a passing shower.

Still all was wrong.

The Nazarenes were richer every day. The very faithful seemed to be resigned and to have grown less faithful than of yore. Some even shaved their beards, leaving a moustache upon their upper lips, after the Turkish style.

The women wore their veils so thin, that they were more an incentive than a hiding of their charms. They laughed and talked as they went through the streets holding each

other's hands, and hence, under their *haiks* sometimes Si Taher fancied that the outline of their figures looked as if stays confined them, after the fashion of the Nazarenes. The electric light, the tramways, theatres, the railway station, and the port, where Moslems, Christians, Negroes, and Chinese all worked together, all the slaves of him who paid them, without distinction, either of creed or race, all seemed a menace to Islám.

The fault must be, he thought, a lack of faith; Allah still gave the victory, but gave it only to the men who fought, and so Si Taher passed his days pondering upon all he saw, and miserable, anxious and unquiet, like a wild beast deprived of liberty.

Types of his sort—fine Arab types that look as if they might have followed either The Praised One himself or Okba, Musa or Tarik—come from the desert, or from some *dúar* lost in the hills, no one knows how or whence.

It seems a miracle how little time has changed them from the first Arabs who came to Africa a thousand years ago.

They are the men marked out by nature and by fate for prophets, and if they have no

following the fault is not with them but with the changing times.

Brown and hard-looking, as if cut out of walnut-wood; with a beard so thick it looked more like a setting than a beard, though it was flecked with grey; his long and wavy hair falling about his shoulders like the mane of a wild horse, all in Si Taher, showed his desert origin and his descent from the wild tribes that, centuries ago, poured out like locusts from the Hadramut to overspread the world.

From his whole being there exhaled an air of mystery, of fanaticism, of ferocity mixed with a savage simpleness.

His thin and muscular body which his *haik* veiled, but did not hide, showed glimpses of his legs and arms, hairy as are the limbs of an orang-outang. His feet were shod with sandals of undressed camel's skin. His strong and knotted hands looked like the roots of an old oak, left bare above the ground, both in their size and make.

He always carried in his hand a staff of argán wood, which use and perspiration had polished like a bone, during the years of his wanderings up and down the various countries of Islám. No one remembered when he had

first appeared, or where he came from, although Algiers and Constantine, Tlemcen, and the cities of the coast had known him well for years. At times he passed whole days silent and motionless. At times he sat in the mosque court, but motionless; so motionless that it might well have happened, that which did happen to the Prophet (whom may God have pardoned) who, being in an ecstasy of prayer, remained so quiet, that a dove, lighting on his shoulder, laid an egg inside his hood. Though he said nothing, yet it was known he was an enemy of all the Christians, hating them mortally.

The Arabs say knowledge is from the desert, and in a certain measure they are right; for certainly more of the primitive instincts of the race are to be found amongst those born amongst its sands, than falls to those whose lives are passed within a labyrinth of bricks.

Not that the Arabs think of that when they enunciate their apothegm, with the same serious air of enunciating an experience of their own, habitual to them even in the most futile things of life.

Certain it is that in the desert all the remains of old-world science, and the tradi-

tions of their faith, are better far preserved than in the towns, where modern notions and conversation with the Infidel—who, as the Arabs say, came from the sea—corrupt their purity.

Names of the stars, as Betelgeux and Aldebáran, Sohail and Fomalhaut, Algol, Altair, and Ras Alháque; legends of the first dawning of Islám; the adventures of the four just men, the companions of the Prophet; the daily practice of the simple, healthy life that nomads lead; the respect that children owe to elders, even the classical speech of the tribe of the Khoresh, all is preserved, more pure and more intense, out in the Sáhara, than in these lands, spurned by the Christian's boots, where his hat is, as it were, a challenge to the Believers' eyes. On that account, when a man from the desert comes to town, men venerate him, as the most perfect incarnation of the race. So, the brown, rag-clad, turbanless Si Taher, with his thick curly mane, confined about his forehead, with a grey cord of camel's hair, was looked on as a saint, that is, a man who cared not for the world, but lived within himself, for amongst Arabs faith is everything. Good works are estimable, especially when they bring

benefits, but faith is Allah's gift; he gives or he withholds.

Through streets and squares he wandered, looking at everything with the fixed eyes of the true desert-born, which take in everything, down to the smallest detail, though they seem quite opaque.

He saw, and hated all he saw; and above everything his soul revolted when he saw some little soldier striking a true Believer without cause, shouldering him off the pavement or, with a sudden pull, snatching his turban off, and leaving him ashamed, bald-headed, and a sport for children and for fools.

Then in his eyes there shone a flame as when a man turns on the electric light and shuts it instantly, or when a captive lion glares for a moment at some idiot, when he sticks his cane between his bars.

However, like a true Arab as he was, he had himself in hand, and the first fury over, knew how to dull his eyes, and leave his face expressionless and blank. Much did he ponder on the ancient glories of his race and on the vestiges of antique splendour still existing in the land that Arabs call the Andalós, naming it always with a sigh.

Well did he know the Tower of Seville, the mosque of Cordoba, Malaga and its citadel and, best of all, the Castle of the Pomegranate, called by the Infidel, Granada, the city of dreams.

"Oh Granada," he would say, "I thought to see thee as a bride in spring, but I have seen thee widowed and in sorrow; I thought to see thee with my heart full of joy, but instead my eyes have filled with tears."

In his youth he had wandered to Madrid, capital of the Infidel, whose women all are veilless, and who know neither faith nor law. "May God destroy them," he would piously observe, passing between his strong and hairy fingers the beads of a thick rosary of white bone, which he had always in his hand, after the fashion of his kind. In his youth he had been a shepherd, and well remembered the happy days, when lying with his head against a bush of dry palmetto, watching his goats, half sleeping and half waking, amongst the sandy pastures of the Sáhara, he played upon a reed, waiting with patience for the evening prayer, and when the day was longer than the shadow of a spear. He liked to muse upon the proverb, "No prophet, but was a shepherd in his youth"; and used to say with an air

of self-satisfaction, "Mohammed was a shepherd, as was I; shepherds were Abraham and David; why, therefore, shall not I be one, if Allah and his Messenger give me their aid?" In fact, all that a man, shepherd or not, requires is but God's help, and this the Arabs know, larding their speech with pious phrases, such as "May God bestow a blessing on thee," "May God increase thy welfare," or "God strengthen thee."

At times the poet, who, it is said, sleeps in the heart of every man, and not infrequently in Arabs, in despite of their material life, woke in Si Taher, and he saw the empire of Islám once again flourishing, like a palm tree by a pool.

He saw the banner of the Nazarenes trampled beneath the feet of the Believers, and its dominion once more re-established, where it had flourished in the past. As in a dream, he used to stray about the streets, with his eyes fixed on vacancy. Little by little men began to say he was a saint, a condition easily acquired with the Arabs, amongst whom the dividing-line between saint and madmen is not so stringently drawn, as it is with ourselves. To them all things are natural, as all things

come from Allah, and if he wishes that a man shall be a saint he breathes upon him, making him mad, a hero, or a prophet, and setting him apart. When Europeans passed him in the streets they felt a feeling of repulsion; almost of fear; the Arabs, on the other hand, an ecstasy of joy when they beheld the terror that he caused.

Rumours went round he was an emissary of the Sennusi, that Sheikh and prophet who, from the depths of his oasis, never ceased praying for the restoration of the faith. Others again averred he was a prophet, and waited for a sign, that sign for which the whole world of Islám is waiting anxiously. When they receive it, so tradition says, they will all rise: the husbandman will leave the plough, the camel-driver his long line of camels, shepherds their flocks, and from the hills and plains, thousands will march to drive the Runis to the sea.

Poor and without a friend, solitary like a naked sword without a sheath, Si Taher passed his life, now sleeping in the courtyards of the mosques, now by a camel-driver's fire, again upon the shore behind a boat, with the waves lulling him to sleep, now in the market-places

watching the crowds, and walking through the press, absorbed and quiet, as he were walking in a wood.

Si Taher's brainpan, always as agitated as a pan of crickets, kept him alternatively plunged in the deepest contemplation, or else a prey to visions, which left him writhen and exhausted with their vividness and force.

At times, he saw himself on horseback, with his long flint-lock in his hand, standing up in the stirrups, leaning well back against the cantle, his long reins floating in the air, his burnous streaming like a flag, and close behind him the serried ranks of an innumerable army of the mysterious, blue-clad, close-veiled warriors, sprung from the desert sands, as in the time of the Almohades, when those fierce sectaries spread over Spain like locusts, shouting the name of God. Under the influence of such dreams, his fury knew no bounds, and from a peaceful, contemplative man leaning upon his staff, and watching everything without a word, he suddenly became a maniac, raving and foaming at the mouth, till with the very violence of his emotions, he would collapse upon the sand. At such times everything he saw was matter for his rage.

French soldiers, with their baggy trousers and short jackets, and worst of all their officers, dressed tightly, an indecency to the true Believer's eye, caused him to gnash his teeth, and mutter that their mothers were all shameless, veilless ones, who never had said No.

Europe with all its pomps and vanities, quick-firing guns, its telegraphs and telephones, railways and workhouses, its boots with paper soles, its women with tight stays and high-heeled boots, its men who shaved their chins, leaving their hair to grow, as if they had been Jinns, its justice which to him was tyranny, and its injustices which kept him still uncomprehending, all appeared as a bad dream.

He had not grasped that that which is, is the best that the world has known to those who live in it, and that true justice only can be found in some far country, unattainable by man.

Well understood, the Holy Land lies always just a little farther on, as did Manoa, Trapalanda, the city of the Cæsars and that enchanted city in the far-distant, opaline and sun-flushed mountains, above San Luis Potosí. For poor Si Taher, it was none of these,

neither the Andalós, nor Egypt, Bagdad, Irak-el-Hind, or far-off Nabothea, but in the humblest *dúar*, thatched hut, or circle of low, black tents of camel's hair where were maintained in their integrity the customs of the faith.

These usages, which seem as if even in the times of the *Arabian Nights*, they were old and time-worn, and natural laws which dated from the childhood of mankind, and which the Arabs had received from those their ancestors, who in the Neje and the Hedjáz, wandered with flocks and herds by day and night upon the plains, were to Si Taher as the essence of his blood. The panorama of the bay, its ships and boats, the high white town set in its frame of greenest gardens, the Alcazába, aloof, mysterious and grim, the life of the bazaars, the open squares, in which the water-carriers bending beneath their bursting goat-skin, ringing a little brazen bell, the passing women, noiseless as spectres, and close veiled, seemed to say nothing to the wanderer, or perhaps said much, as may some well-remembered field say much or little to the animals.

At times the injustice of his lot made him indignant, as it has made indignant every outcast since the beginning of the world, and as in

the future when the advance of progress has made man doubly a slave, will make those who have failed, still more indignant than of yore.

Then he would say, "Vice pitches her tent and fortune fixes the poles of it, whilst virtue travels with adversity as her sole follower"; then set himself to find the reason with that blind faith in God, which from the days of St. Augustine all Africans have shared. At last he thought he saw his way. Could he but purify mankind all would be well, and once again Allah would give the victory; but well he knew that though the world goes out to greet the conqueror, he must conquer first.

Since our first fathers left the fair garden by the Tigris, all prophets, mad and just men, and everyone who thinks upon the miserable condition of mankind, racked between rage and tears, has seen that man needed but purity of life to save himself.

Much did Si Taher ponder on the first step to take, feeling as every one of the long line of prophets in the East has felt, that if the world was to be saved, the task depended on himself.

His constant wanderings and fasts, prolonged till he saw visions, even at noontide, had re-

duced him to a skeleton, so that he was in a fit state to try and move the world, without a fulcrum for the lever of his soul.

Men saw him straying about the places, where those who in times past had given up their lives, fighting against the enemies of God, lay buried, with a rough stone to mark their resting-places.

At night he gazed upon the stars, and sat down listening to the sounding of the surf, the scent of orange flowers filling his nostrils as it floated down the breeze.

Tears dimmed his eyes, and he recited poems from the *Diwan-el-Faredi*, or from the *Seven Suspended Lamps of the Moallakat.* Hours would he ponder on Al Makhari, reading the records of his race, his studies and his musings in thought becoming still more melancholy, and still a little nearer to the thin line that separates madness from generosity, a line so thin that the most part of men can never see it, thinking all mad who are not as themselves.

When on the sands at powder-play, the horsemen passed like a hurricane, twisting their guns around their heads, just as their ancestors had whirled their javelins, Si Taher

shouted as they passed and called upon God's name.

Stretched in the shade, he played his lute for hours, and sang to it, in a low voice, interminable songs, finishing every verse with a long-drawn-out "Allah!" that seemed the plaint of some Believer who had lost his faith, and mourned its obsequies.

When he smoked hemp he used to lie in that strange drunkenness or ecstasy that falls upon the smoker of the dark, pungent weed. What dreams passed through his brain he told to no one, or if he saw the *huris*, beautiful as fawns, moving like branches of the myrobolan, diffusing ambergris.

Most likely all his dreams were either on the glories of his race, the times of Othman and of Abu Bekr, or of that age when all the poor were rich in contentment, the rich all poor in spirit, and everyone was satisfied with his condition, underneath the sky. Given over to his dreams and wanderings, Si Taher grew more ragged every day. His fell of hair hung round his head and neck as if it were a sort of unkempt aureole, uncombed and dirty, and the strange air between a prophet and a fool, so common to men of his kind throughout

the East, rendered him terrible and ridiculous at the same time, as he stalked glaring, through the streets.

Little by little the authorities got wind. Si Taher was a dangerous man. They watched him carefully, but he did nothing but wander through the streets, though it was known that many waited anxiously, looking for a sign, and the whole town was stirred, as any town throughout the East is stirred when it is rumoured that a prophet will arise.

At last one morning, one of those mornings in the spring, in which the town buried in verdure, all bathed in sun, and with the scent of blossom from the orange gardens make them appear like ante-rooms to Paradise, with the breeze gently ruffling the leaves, the sea and land wrapped in a veil of whitest light, intense and melancholy at the same time, as if the sun were tired with shining for so many thousand years on the same landscape, when everything was tranquil, as tranquil as in an island lost in the Pacific, Si Taher rushed into the street, proclaiming the Jehad, "Allahu Ackbas" the Holy War, quintessence of the religion of the sword,

and the last word of all religions upon earth. Long years had passed since it last echoed through the town. It ran like quicksilver right to the hearts of those who heard it, and serious men seated, like idols in a temple, half sleeping in their shops, shivered and rose, and then half doubtingly walked towards the market-place. There they paused, hesitating, and one looking round furtively said to his friend, fingering his rosary the while, "My son, take heed thy mouth break not thy neck," and his friend, with his nostrils wide distended, and with his breath coming spasmodically, replied, "Yea, let the archer tarry ere he draw the bow, for the shaft when it leaves the string returns no more . . . but did you hear the cry?"

The water-carriers left their goat-skins on the sand, and from the "Marsa" a crowd of boatmen, grasping stretchers, and handling their knives, left their boats rocking at the quay, and flowed towards the market-place all shouting out "Jehad." The word of fear was mumbled by old men, and children, playing, shouted it aloud.

Throughout the city a vague murmur ran, as in some town, built on the slopes of a

volcano, there runs a murmur, just before an earthquake, or a lava-flow.

Rich Arabs clad in spotless white, serious and imposing in their fleecy haiks, and swaying in their majestic walk, like camels, heard the cry, and taking their red praying cushions underneath their arms, stood undecided waiting for a sign.

Even the Spahis seated erect in their high saddles, despite their discipline, looked at each other furtively, afraid to meet each other's eyes.

The murmur grew, just as a mountain stream in flood grows as it rushes on, and at the head of a huge crowd, appeared Si Taher looking like one possessed.

Foam flecked his beard, his eyes flashed fire, and in his hand he bore a goat's head fresh cut off, from which fell drops of blood upon the faithful, when he raised his hand before commencing his harangue.

He raised his voice, looked up to heaven, and in the very act of speaking, stopped, as a horse stops checked by the Arab bit. He stopped and gazed as, pushing through the crowd, there came a functionary. Short, and in an ill-cut uniform that rendered him more vulgar still, he tripped along with the peculiar

skipping movement of the French soldier, looking upon the Arabs, with the look a butcher gives at a fat sheep, just as he draws the knife.

His smoked-out cigarette hung to his under lip, and his short sabre beat against his legs, as he strode on with that peculiar air of arrogance which all authority confers.

Pushing his way amongst the crowd, he made his way amongst the Arabs, who half timidly and half ferociously stood waiting, as a tame lion waits, not daring to attack its keeper, because it fears the whip.

Striding up to the would-be Messiah, he looked him firmly in the face, and in a jargon, half Arabic, half French, said roughly, "Macanshi el Jehad; Si Taher, you are drunk, or have been smoking hemp."

Si Taher vacillated, clutched his knife firmly, then sheathed it, and then let fall the bloody goat's head, which left a bright red blotch upon the sand.

Obediently he followed the French soldier through the crowd, and all the Arabs quietly went home to wait the coming of another prophet, one to whom God should give the victory, and the white town returned to slumber in the sun.

LA PAMPA

ALL grass and sky, and sky and grass, and still more sky and grass, the Pampa stretched from the *pajonales* on the western bank of the Paraná right to the stony plain of Uspallata, a thousand miles away.

It stretched from San Luis de la Punta down to Bahia Blanca, and again crossing the Uruguay, comprised the whole republic of that name and a good half of Rio Grande, then with a loop took in the *misiones* both of the Paraná and Paraguay.

Through all this ocean of tall grass, green in the spring, then yellow, and in the autumn brown as an old boot, the general characteristics were the same.

A ceaseless wind ruffled it all and stirred its waves of grass. Innumerable flocks and herds enamelled it, and bands of ostriches (Mirth of the Desert, as the Gauchos called them) and herds of palish-yellow deer stood on the tops of the

cuchillas and watched you as you galloped past.

Down in the south, the Patagonian hare, mataco, and the quiriquincho scudded away or burrowed in the earth. Towards the middle region of this great galloping ground, the greatest that God made . . . perhaps He could not possibly have made a better, even had He tried . . . great armadillos and iguanas showed themselves, and in the north, around the deep metallic-toned *isletas* of hard-wood *montés*, flocks of macaws—red, yellow, and bright blue—floated like butterflies. Up in the north, ant-eaters (the Tamandua of the Guaranis) and tapirs wandered, looking as if they had escaped from out the Ark.

Over the whole extent the "tero-tero" hovered, screamed, whistled, and circled just above your horse's head. From every *monté* and from every maize field flew chattering flocks of parakeets.

Tigers and pumas inhabited the woods, right from the Estero Ñembuco, which I have crossed so often with the mud and water to my horse's cinch, down to the Antarctic beech forests of Sandy Point.

In all the rivers nutrias and lobos and the

carpincho, with its great red teeth, swam with their heads awash, laid flat upon the stream, just like a seal at sea.

Viscachas burrowed, and wise, solemn little owls sat at the entrance of their burrows making pretence to guard them, as does a sentinel before a palace door.

Locusts occasionally visited the Pampa, blackening the sun, devouring all the crops, and disappearing just as they had come.

"Where is the Manga?" was a familiar question on the plains, and grave and bearded men reined in their horses, their ponchos suddenly clinging to their sides, just as a boat's sail clings around the mast when it has lost the wind, and pointing with a lean, brown finger stained with tobacco juice, replied, *Por allacito, en los Porongos*, and then departed, just as ships speak each other on the sea. The north wind filled the air with cottony filaments, and the pampero, roaring like a whole *rodeo* that had taken fright, levelled the houses and the grass. The air was full in summer of a perpetual twittering of insects that hung invisible, whilst in the winter the white hoar-frost in early morning silvered the grass, and hung congealed upon the tops of

stakes, just as it did in the old world in which the poet-king penned the "Cantar de los Cantares," two thousand years ago.

All that, was what the Pampa had inherited from nature. When I first knew it, it looked just as it must have looked on the morning of the seventh day in far-off Nabothea, that old-world Entre-Rios, when the Creator rested and, looking earthwards, saw that it was good.

Man had but little altered it, but for a peach grove here and there, a white *estancia* house, or a straw-coloured *rancheria* or *pulperia*, built either at the pass of some great river or on a hill, as that at the Cuchilla de Peralta, by which the mule-trail, used since the Conquest, led, winding upon its way towards Brazil.

Men passed each other seated upright on their *recaos* driving their horses in a bunch in front of them, swinging their whips around their heads.

They passed, shouting a salutation, or if too far off to be heard, waving a hand, and sank into the plain just as a vessel sinks into the sea, the body of the horse first disappearing, then the man, poncho, and, last of all, his hat. The waves of grass appeared to swallow him, and as men rode they kept their eyes fixed on

the horizon, or, if at night, upon a star. When the night caught them on the plains, after first hobbling the mare, they tied a horse to a long *soga*, making, if neither stick nor bone were to be found, a knot in the rope's end, stamping it in, and lying down upon it.

They smoked a cigarette or two, looked at the stars a little, and took good care to place their heads in the direction towards which they had to journey, for in the mists of sunrise nothing was easier than to mistake the point you aimed at, and wander back upon the trail.

In that green ocean, as the proverb said, "he who wanders from the trail is lost"; and it was true enough, as many a heap of bones, to which a shred of tattered cloth still clung, most amply testified, as you came on them on a gallop, looking perhaps for horses stolen or strayed. Your companion might or might not rein up his horse, but certainly would point in passing, and remark, "See where the grass grows rank around the bones; there has a Christian died."

"Christian" was used more as a racial than a religious term, the Indians usually being called *Los Bravos*, *Los Infieles*, *Los Tapes*, the latter usually applied either to the descen-

dants of the Charruas in the Banda Oriental, or to the Indian Mansos of the Missions of the north. How much the aforesaid *Infieles* and the *Tapes* had left their impress on the speech and the life of the Gauchos, might be seen by the national costume of the *poncho* and the *chiripá*. These, as the early writers tell us, were adapted from the "Infidel we found dwelling in all these plains, when first Don Pedro de Mendoza came with his following to conquer for his lord, and to proclaim the glory of the name of Him who, though born in a stable, is higher than all kings." In the current Pampa speech the words *bagual*, *ñandu*, *ombú* and *vincha*, *tatu*, *Tacuara*, and *bacaray*, with almost all the names of plants, of shrubs and trees, recalled the influence of the Indians, the Quichuas, and Guaranis, the Pampas and Pehuelches, Charruas, and the rest of those who once inhabited the land.

Las boleadoras, known to the Gauchos as *Las tres Marias*, was the distinctive weapon of the southern plains. With them the Indians slew many of Don Pedro de Mendoza's men at the first Christianising of the River Plate, and with them also did the fierce Gaucho troops who rose under Elio and Liniers crash in the

skulls of various English, Luteranos—for so the good Dean Funes styles them in his history—who under Whitelock had attacked the town. Only upon the Pampa, in the whole world, was this tremendous weapon ever known. None of the Pampa tribes used bows and arrows, for with them the *bolas*, and in especial the single stone, fixed to a plaited thong of hide, and called *la bola perdida*, quite supplied their place.

In fact, for no land but the Pampa, that is, in the Americas (for it could well be used in Africa and Asia), are *las tres Marias* fit. In North America the plains are bushy or the grass is long as hay, conditions which would militate against the throwing of a weapon which, often thrown a yard or two behind the quarry's legs, sprang from the ground and then entangled them.

Nothing could be more typical of the wild life of forty years ago upon the plains than was the figure of a Gaucho dressed in his *poncho* and his *chiripá*, his naked toes clutching the stirrups, his long iron spurs kept in position by a thong of hide, dangling below his heels, his hair bound back by a red silk handkerchief, his eyes ablaze, his silver knife passed

through his sash and *tirador*, and sticking out just under his right elbow, his *pingo* with its mane cut into castles, and its long tail floating out in the breeze as, twisting *las tres Marias* round his head, he flew like lightning down a slope, which the mere European horseman would have looked on as certain death, intent to "ball" one of a band of fleet *ñandus* all sailing down the wind.

Letting the *bolas* go, so easily, it seemed as if his will and not his hand directed them, they hurtled through the air, revolving on their own axis sixty or seventy yards, and, when the *sogas* met the ostriches' neck, the centrifugal force being averted, the balls fell down and, wrapping tightly round the legs, soon threw the giant bird upon its side. Ten or twelve bounds brought up the hunter, who, springing from his saddle, his huge iron spurs clanking like fetters on the ground, either put hobbles on his horse, or if he felt quite sure of him, threw the long reins upon the ground, confident that it, trained by experience to know a step upon the reins involved a pull upon the mouth, would stand obediently.

Then, drawing his *facon*, the Gaucho either stuck it deeply into the bird, low down upon

the breast, or if occasion served, drawing a spare set of *boleadoras* from around his waist, or taking them from underneath the *cojinillo* of the *recao*, crashed in his victim's skull. Sometimes, indeed, with a *revés* of the *facon* they used to cut the ostrich's head off at a blow; but this wanted a sharp and heavy knife, and an arm with which to wield it, strong beyond ordinary.

I have seen a Gaucho, hunting wild colts, or ostriches, in the very action of swinging the *bolas* round his head, have his horse fall with him, alight upon his feet, and without losing the command of the direction of his swing, catch his own horse as it, springing to its feet, was just about to leave him helpless afoot upon the plains.

Afoot upon the plains . . . that was indeed a phrase of fear upon the Pampas of the south. No mariner afloat upon the waves, his main-stay but a little boat, was in a worse condition than the man who, from some cause or other, found himself horseless in the vast sea of grass.

From having been as free as is a bird, he instantly became as helpless as the same bird with a wing broken by a shot.

If cattle saw him, they not infrequently attacked him, when his one chance of safety (on the open plains) was to lie down and, simulating death, to let them smell him, which when they had done, if he lay still enough, they turned and went away. When the pedestrian approached a house the troop of dogs that every Gaucho kept surrounded him like wolves, barking and snapping at his legs if it were daytime, or falling on him literally like wolves if it should happen to be dark. Small streams, which generally had muddy bottoms, and through which his horse had plunged, sinking down to the cinch, but always getting through, to the man afoot became impassable, making him wander up and down their banks, perhaps for miles, till he could find a "pass."

If by an evil chance he lost his way his fate was sealed, especially upon that portion where distances were great between *estancias*, and where marauding Indians on a *malón* would kill him if they saw him, just as a boy kills a young bird when it runs fluttering across his path. To lose one's horse and saddle was worse than bankruptcy; in fact, was so considered, as in the story of a Frenchman who

seeing a Gaucho standing idly about, inquired why he did not go out and work.

"Work, *madre mia*," said the man, "how can I work when I am bankrupt?"

"What then," the Frenchman said, "you have been in commerce, and fallen upon a bad affair; poor man, I pity you." The Gaucho stared at him, and answered, "In commerce—never in my life, but at a *pulperia* some Infidel or other stole my horse and saddle, with *lazo*, *bolas*, and a *cojinillo* that I bought up in Rioja, and left me without shade."

Poor man, how could he work, afoot and saddleless? No doubt before the Conquest men crossed the plains afoot; but painfully, taking perhaps long years to go from the Atlantic to the Andes, groping along from stream to stream, as the first navigators felt their way from cape to cape, coasting along the bays.

The coming of the horse gave a new life to the vast plains; for nature seemed to welcome horses once again, from the long interval between the times in which the Tertian eight-footed horse roamed on the Pampas, which now are populated by the descendants of the thirteen mares and the three stallions that

Pedro de Mendoza left behind when he sailed back to Spain, after his first attempt to colonise.

This is the way I recollect it. First came short grasses, eaten close down by sheep, then thistles that grew as high as a man's head, a wilderness, through which the cattle had made a labyrinth of paths; then coarser grasses, and by degrees wiry, brown bents, until at length almost all sign of grass was lost, where the Pampas joined the stony plains of Patagonia in the south.

Northwards, the waving grasses also grew sparser, till in the Jesuit Missions, clumps of *yatais* encroached upon the plains, which ended finally, in the dense woods of Paraguay.

Silence and solitude were equally the note of north and south, with a horizon bounded by what a man could see when sitting on his horse.

There were few landmarks, but in the southern and the middle districts a dark *ombú*, standing beside some lone *tapera* and whose shade fell on some *rancho* or *estancia*, although the proverb said, "The house shall never prosper upon whose roof is thrown the shade of the *ombú*."

Well did the ancient Quichuas name the plains, with the word signifying "space," for all was spacious—earth, sky, the waving continent of grass; the enormous herds of cattle and of horses; the strange effects of light; the fierce and blinding storms and, above all, the feeling in men's minds of freedom, and of being face to face with nature, under those southern skies.

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